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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Russian (1RU0) Paper 4F: Writing

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Introduction

Students were assessed on their ability to communicate effectively through writing in Russian.

Students needed to communicate effectively in writing for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts; to write short texts, using simple sentences and familiar language accurately to convey meaning and exchange information; to produce clear and coherent text of extended length to present facts and express ideas and opinions appropriately for different purposes and in different settings; to make accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, to describe and narrate with reference to past, present and future events; to manipulate the language, using and adapting a variety of structures and vocabulary with increasing accuracy and fluency for new purposes, including using appropriate style and register; to make independent, creative and more complex use of the language, as appropriate; to note down key points, express and justify individual thoughts and points of view, in order to interest, inform or convince; and to translate sentences and short texts from English into the assessed language to convey key messages accurately and to apply grammatical knowledge of language and structures in context.

The assessment was out of 60 marks. Each question was set in a context drawn from the themes and topics set by Pearson. The assessment tasks featured general content that was familiar and accessible to all students. Students were required to produce responses of varying lengths and types to express facts, ideas and opinions in Russian.

The length of each response required and complexity of language increased across the paper.

Recommended word counts were specified for each question. Students were not penalised for writing more or fewer words than recommended in the word count or for going beyond the mandatory bullets. One question was a translation of a short passage from English into Russian.

All assessments were marked against assessment criteria. The instructions to students were all in Russian. The use of dictionaries was not permitted.

The assessment time was 1 hour and 15 minutes in length. The paper consisted of three open questions and one translation from English into Russian. Students had to answer all questions.

Question 1 assessed students on their ability to write to describe and to express opinions.

Question 2 assessed students on their ability to note down key points and convey information.

Students had to use the formal register.

Question 3 had two options from which students had to select one. This question assessed students on their ability to convey information, narrate, express opinions, interest, and convince the reader about a certain point. Students had to use the informal register.

This question was common to the Higher tier.

Question 4 was the translation question. Students were required to translate five sentences from English to Russian. The sentences were ordered by increasing level of difficulty.

Question 1

This question addressed the theme of Identity and Culture, and the topic of Sport. Students were given a photo of three ice hockey players in St Petersburg; they had to describe the photo and express their opinion about sport in about 15-20 words of Russian. The question could be answered using exclusively a present time frame, but students were not penalised for using other tenses. Most students responded to this question with some success. The most successful ones restricted themselves to the recommended word count. Exceeding the word limit often increased the scope for error, ambiguity and irrelevance.

Most students described that sport was taking place with reference to the number of players in the picture and expressed a simple opinion about sport. Some students wrote in the first person, which was totally acceptable and some students gave opinions on the photo itself. Most students made some attempt to describe the clothes being worn but some students found it difficult to use the verb "носить". Most students could use the verb "я люблю" to give a straightforward opinion but some unsuccessful use of the Cyrillic alphabet at times made for a less convincing response e.g. "Я ЛИВЛИ". Less successful response either omitted the opinion altogether or else omitted to describe the photo.

Question 2

This question addressed the theme of Future aspiration, study and work and the topic of Work. Students were given four bullet points under the context of finding a job in a Russian shop while living in Russia; they had to write 30-35 words of Russian. The question could be answered using present and future time frames, but students were not penalised for using other tenses. Some students found this question difficult to access, as they appeared not to understand some or all of the bullet points. Several students wrote about school and subjects which could be taken as a response to bullet points about why you want to work in Russia and hobbies.

The first point (*когда вы будете работать*) was frequently misunderstood with students seemingly unable to recognise the question word "когда". Most students omitted it altogether; some students stated where they currently work. A few students explained that they would be in Russia in summer, which was an appropriate response in the context.

The second point was better dealt with and the majority of students could give a "потому что" or "так как" response to "почему".

Point three proved difficult for many students who did not recognise the question word "как" and minimal references to transport. Several students put forward "ехал" in the past tense which did show simple understanding of the point although in an inappropriate tense.

The final point was designed to elicit a present tense response in response to the cognate "хобби". Many students scored a mark for this point by referring to sports or school subjects with an appropriate opinion.

There were, however, some good responses where all bullet points were attempted and were well linked. These students used tenses appropriately, either the future tense with "буду" or the use of "хочу".

Question 3 (a)

This question addressed the theme of Identity and Culture and the sub heading of Cultural Life describing celebrations. Students were given four bullet points within the context of an email to a friend about birthdays; they had to write 60-65 words of Russian. The question had to be answered using past, present and future time frames as well as giving an opinion of preference. This question was slightly more popular than Q3(b).

Many students found this question more accessible than Q2 with clear evidence of use of tense and "день рождения" seemed to be a well recognised topic. There were some quite lengthy descriptions of past birthday celebrations and sometimes was more fully developed than the response to the other bullet points. Many students successfully wrote something about how they usually spend a birthday in answer to the second task. For the third bullet point students seemed to recognise that a preference was required between a birthday "с друзьями" or with "с семьёй". Less successful responses only mentioned with whom they liked to spend a birthday without mentioning the element of preference. The final bullet point was the least well accomplished with students talking about a future birthday rather than plans for summer. Some students also wrote about their future plans which did not directly deal with the requirement of the task.

The most successful students restricted themselves to the recommended word count. Exceeding the word limit often increased the scope for error, ambiguity and irrelevance. There was also some good evidence of using the stimulus material with successful manipulation of verbs from second to first person. "Обычно" was generally well understood.

Question 3 (b)

This question addressed the theme of School and the topic what school is like with an element of future plans. Students were given four bullet points within the context of writing to a friend about school; students were required to write 60-65 words of Russian. The question had to be answered using past, present and future time frames as well as giving an opinion.

This question was slightly less popular than Q3(a).

The bullet points were generally well understood. The first bullet point required students to write about what they usually do in school. Students wrote on a range of topics including school subjects, school routine and break time activities. All of these topics demonstrated successful comprehension of the bullet point.

The second point required students to talk about subjects that they had studied in the past. Many responded successfully and students who said that they had started a subject in the past and continued to study at present were also rewarded for phrases such as "я изучаю математику пять лет". Those students who merely wrote about what they now study with no reference to time had not fully responded to this point. The third point required an opinion on whether it is good to go to university or not. Many students wrote about their own future intentions without offering an opinion, but most such responses were regarded as adequate. The fourth bullet point four was often answered well, with appropriate reference to future plans although some students wrote about their holiday plans. Such a response was still acceptable.

The most successful students restricted themselves to the recommended word count. Exceeding the word limit often increased the scope for error, ambiguity

and irrelevance. There was also some good evidence of using the stimulus material with successful manipulation of verbs from second to first person. "Прошлом" and "будущее" were generally well understood.

Question 4 (a)

Question 4 addressed the theme of Local area, Holiday and travel and the topic of Town.

Students had to translate five sentences from English to Russian. The level of difficulty increased throughout the questions. The first three questions allowed two marks per response and the final two questions were awarded three marks per response. The first question required a present tense response, the second question required use of adjective, the third question required a preposition, the fourth question required adjective and negative and the fifth question required past tense and reason.

As this was a new question type, several students found this a challenging question. However grammatical accuracy was not essential as long as meaning was communicated. Very few achieved full marks. Many found particular items of vocabulary a problem, for example, 'very', 'near', 'there is', 'no', 'went', 'Thursday', 'wanted', 'to buy' and 'new'. Others found difficulty with grammar, such as possessive pronouns and negative structure. However, most students at least attempted each sentence and were rewarded in most cases with a mark for a partial translation.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, students are offered the following advice:

- answer the questions within the range of words which is suggested
- read the bullet points carefully and note which tense is required in your response
- be aware that words such as *прошлом* (past) suggest that your response should be about a past event, while *будущее* (future) suggests that your answer should feature a future event.
- other key words in question instructions such as *почему* (why) require a reasons
- be prepared to write in the first person and in the third person
- correct formation of verbs is essential in all questions
- in Q1, write both a description of the photo and an opinion
- there is no need to use tenses other than the present in Q1
- in Q2 and Q3, answer all four of the bullet points
- Q2 uses a formal register, so the instructions will say *ВЫ* rather than *ТЫ*
- Q2 requires only present and future time frames in your response
- in Q3, try and vary the language you use, and avoid repetition
- in Q4, try and translate all the words, as you will get credit even for partially correct answers
- ensure that your handwriting is as legible as neat as possible
- do not write English script in your response
- check your letter formation and check for confusion between letter such as *б,в п,р г,д м,т и,н*