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Examiners' Report
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Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Russian (1RU0) Paper 4H: 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 Russian 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 from the Pearson specification. 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 the 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 25 minutes in length. The paper consisted of two questions and one translation from English into Russian. Students had to answer all questions.

Question 1 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 Foundation tier.

Question 2 had two options from which students had to select one. This question assessed students on their ability to convey information, narrate, express and justify ideas and opinions, and interest or convince the reader. Students had to use the formal register.

Question 3 was the translation question. Students were required to translate a short paragraph from English into Russian. The individual sentences were ordered by increasing level of difficulty.

Question 1 (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 considerably slightly more popular than Q1(b).

Many students found this question very accessible 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 this bullet point 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 1 (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 considerably less popular than Q1(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. "Прошлое" and "будущее" were generally well understood.

Question 2 (a)

This question addressed the theme of International and global dimension and the topic of Sporting competition. Students were given four bullet points within the context of a letter to the organisers of a sporting event convincing them to offer a place in that event; they had to write 90-110 words of Russian. The question had to be answered using past, present and future time frames.

This question was slightly more popular than Q2(b).

The first bullet point required students to explain why they wished to take part in such a competition. The second bullet point required explanation of which sports they had done in the past, it was perfectly acceptable to write about a sport that they had commenced in the past and continue to play. The third point required students to talk about what their intentions were if they were to spend the summer in Yaroslavl. The fourth bullet point required an opinion on the importance of sport which gave students the opportunity to talk about healthy lifestyle. Many of the students produced some really excellent essays. They entered fully into the requirements of the question and succeeded in writing a highly convincing letter dealing with the bullet points. They displayed linguistic flair together with an exploration of interesting ideas, justification, logical argument and individual expression. However, some students struggled in balancing the requirements of the task and some students failed to read the bullet points very carefully e.g. *какими видами спорта ...* requires more than one sport. Some students merged bullet points 1 and 2 – I want to take part because I have played football for 8 years and I am very good. Students should bear in mind that more than 50% of the mark is for content and communication and the mark scheme stipulates that "top box" answers must "communicate detailed information related to the task" and "develop key points". As such, it is difficult to produce first-rate answers that deal with a bullet point in the space of a single clause. For example, a sentence such as *"в прошлом я играл в футбол и теннис с моими друзьями"* does not, on its own, demonstrate effective development of the main idea.

Question 2(b)

This question addressed the theme of School, and the topic of School trips. Students were given four bullet points within the context of a Russian school's request for information about school trips; they had to write 90-110 words of Russian. The question had to be answered using past, present and future time frames.

This question was slightly less popular than Q2(a).

The first bullet point required students to talk about a recent school trip, The second bullet point required an opinion on school trips in general. The third bullet point required students to discuss potential problems that could arise on a school trip. The fourth bullet point asked students to talk about the next trip that they will participate in.

The better responses demonstrated full response with a balanced approach to the four bullet points. Students were clearly able to talk about past and future school trips and these bullet points allowed good demonstration of tenses with a

good range of vocabulary. Trips to local attractions as well as residential trips were described.

Less convincing responses did not develop the second and third bullet points. In the second bullet most managed to address the general opinion, quite a few, either as well as, or exclusively, described their thoughts about the excursion they had written about for bullet point 1. The same issue occurred in bullet point 3, with most managing to write about problems in general, but several writing about the problems that occurred during their own excursion. Some students showed genuine enthusiasm, creativity and inspiration in their responses even if slightly awkward expressions were used: " *Школа может потерять школьников, но эта проблема не ужасная. Это не конец мира. Школьники могут быть негрустными и видеть другую культуру*".

Question 3

This question addressed the theme of Identity and culture, and the topic of Who am I – friends. Students had to translate a paragraph from English to Russian. This was a new question type, and many students found it difficult. Few achieved full marks, but a pleasing number achieved marks in the top category; the meaning of the passage was fully communicated, and the language and structures were consistently accurate, with errors not hindering clarity.

Vocabulary items which commonly caused problems included 'noisy', 'especially', 'politics', 'to move', 'less' and 'expensive'. Some words which were often omitted included 'especially', 'her' and 'leaving'.

Grammatical structures which caused some problems included the use of the infinitive ('enjoys spending'), the past imperfect ('used to like') and the past infinitive ('after leaving school').

On the whole, most students at least attempted to translate most words, and were able to communicate some of the key ideas without major ambiguity.

Students should note that marks are awarded holistically for this task and, if they are not sure of the exact translation of a given word, full marks can still be achieved if they are able to substitute a convincing Russian synonym. For example, "очень" would be a perfectly acceptable rendering of "especially" in this task.

Pleasingly, most students correctly conjugated the verb жить in sentence 1 and the vast majority were able to communicate the idea of "near". "Used to" threw some students, but a past tense would have sufficed here ("*она любила свой город*"). "Noisy streets" was dealt with well, although sadly one student could not be credited for "*улицы нойзые*". Incidentally, the spelling of улица caused problems (тс and ц, whilst identical phonemes, are not interchangeable in written Russian). A significant number of students knew "*проводить время с*", whilst many knew "*интересоваться*" and its cognates.

Other common errors to beware, although they do communicate meaning, included:

Sochi - Attempt to decline the unchangeable geographical name: *В Сочах/Сочие /Сочии*

Town – *Село/ посёлок/ район/ городок*

To like – *нДравится*

Noisy streets – *громкие/ жаркие дороги*

Especially *-очень / конкретно/ оССобенно / особИно/ больше всего/ именно*

Interests in politics - *интересуется политиками*

After leaving school – *после конца школы /ухода из школы / когда она бросит школу*

She will move into the flat – *переедет в палатку /в маленький домик за городом/ переселится*

Will be less expensive – *которая будет меньше*

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
- write a separate paragraph for each bullet point, as this will help you check that you have covered all of them in detail
- think yourself into the scenario outlined in the instructions and only include material which is relevant to answering the question convincingly
- ensure that your handwriting is as neat as possible
- try to use a variety of grammatical structures
- try to vary the vocabulary you use and avoid repetition
- correct formation of verbs is essential in all questions
- write your answers on the correct pages of the answer booklet if you find that you have written, for example, part of Q2(b) on the page for Q2(a), then please write a brief note so that the examiner (who only sees one question at a time) is aware of this and can take the necessary action
- in Q3, try and translate every word, including what might appear minor words
- try to include near alternatives for vocabulary or structures that you are unsure of in question 3
- care must be taken to write in Cyrillic and not include Latin letters - e.g. u for y, t for τ, s for c. These were the most common
- to access the higher marks there needs to be consistently effective development of all bullet points and creative use of language
- for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy, to access the higher marks, language must be consistently accurate, with several successful examples of each tense, as well as a wide variety of grammatical structures.