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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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

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Introduction

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

Candidates 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 candidates. Candidates 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. Candidates 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 candidates 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. Candidates had to answer all questions.

Question 1 had two options from which candidates had to select one. This question assessed candidates on their ability to convey information, narrate, express opinions, interest, and convince the reader about a certain point. Candidates had to use the informal register.

This question was common to the Foundation tier.

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

Question 3 was the translation question. Candidates 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 “what school is like”. Candidates were given four bullet points within the context of an email to a friend about school subjects; 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 about preferences.

This question was slightly more popular than Q1(b).

Many candidates found this question very accessible with clear evidence of use of tense and “*предметы*” seemed to be a well recognised topic. There were some quite lengthy descriptions of what had happened yesterday in school with some good development of school subjects that the individual candidate had enjoyed or not and this bullet point sometimes was usually fully developed but some candidates did not fully answer by referring to one subject only. Most candidates successfully wrote something about a typical day is spent with good daily routine vocabulary used. For the third bullet point most candidates recognised that a preference was required relating to popular subjects. Less successful responses only mentioned one popular subject or gave a personal opinion rather than developing a response as to which subjects are popular in school. The final bullet point was well handled with the majority of candidates successfully referring to their next year in school. Some less successful responses talked in general terms about future plans rather than relating directly to school intention.

The most successful candidates 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 to first and third person.

Question 1 (b)

This question addressed the theme of identity and culture and the topic of everyday life. Candidates were given four bullet points within the context of writing to a friend about their daily routine; candidates 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 marginally less popular than Q1(a).

The bullet points were generally well understood. The first bullet point required candidates to write about what constitutes a typical morning for them. Candidates wrote on a range of topics including routine from waking up to the journey to school. All of these topics demonstrated successful comprehension of the bullet point.

The second point required candidates to talk about what they had done yesterday. Many responded successfully. Those candidates who merely wrote a continuation of their daily routine with no reference to time had not fully responded to this point. The third point required an opinion on whether it is important to take part in sport or not. Most candidates referred positively to the role of sport and several candidates wrote about their own involvement in sport.

The fourth bullet point four was often answered well, with appropriate reference to plans for a future Saturday. Some candidate described plans for several future Saturdays. Such a response was still acceptable but slightly more vague.

The most successful candidates 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 to first and third person.

Question 2 (a)

This question addressed the theme of International and global dimension and the topic of Bringing the world together in the concept of a music festival. Candidates were given four bullet points within the context of an email to a Russian magazine for young people convincing them of the importance of music festivals; 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 more popular than Q2(b).

The first bullet point required candidates to describe a music festival that they had attended in the past. The second bullet point required candidates to describe genres of music that are popular with their family members. The third point required candidates to talk about what music festival they will attend in the future. The fourth bullet point required an opinion on why young people like music festivals. Many of the candidates produced excellent essays. They entered fully into the requirements of the question and succeeded in writing a highly convincing article dealing with the bullet points. They displayed linguistic flair together with an exploration of interesting ideas, justification, logical argument and individual expression. However, some candidates struggled in balancing the requirements of the task and some candidates failed to read the bullet points very carefully e.g. *какие жанры музыки ...* required more than one musical genre to be described and for a higher response more detailed reasons given. Some candidates produced longer responses to one individual bullet point and made brief reference to one of the other points. Candidates 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 следующем я буду смотреть фестиваль в Америке с моими друзьями”* does not, on its own, demonstrate effective development of the main idea.

Question 2(b)

This question addressed the theme of International and global dimension, and the topic of environmental issues. Candidates were given four bullet points within the context of a Russian website’s request for information environmental issues; 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 less popular than Q2(a).

The first bullet point required candidates to talk about what they had one recently to help the environment. The second bullet point required a description of what is done in a candidate's school to help the environment. This bullet point was especially well developed by the majority of candidates. The third bullet point required candidates to discuss how they will help to protect the environment this week. Some candidates did not make specific reference to the "this week" element and talked about generic future environmental aims. The fourth bullet point asked candidates to give their opinion on public transport. Some candidates merged this point with one of the other bullet points to talk about their past or future intentions relating to public transport.

The better responses demonstrated full response with a balanced approach to the four bullet points. Candidates were clearly able to talk about past and future intentions relating to the environment and many candidates demonstrated a real passion for the topic with reference to campaigns and awareness raising.

Less convincing responses did not develop the fourth bullet point to produce a slightly imbalanced response. Candidates 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.

Question 3

This question addressed the future aspirations, study and work and the topic of work. Candidates had to translate a paragraph from English to Russian. Few achieved full marks due to the missing out of vocabulary items, 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. Some candidates lost the clarity of meaning by adding "this" or "that" when translating "work in an office".

Vocabulary items which commonly caused problems included 'old-fashioned', 'suburbs', 'work experience', 'find', and 'successful'. Some words which were often omitted included 'but' and 'too'.

Grammatical structures which caused some problems included the use of the conditional ('I would like'), the future with *to be* ('hope that I will be') and opinion structures ('I thought it was boring').

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

Candidates 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.

Common errors to beware, as they did not communicate accurately the intended meaning, included:

Old-fashioned: *старый*

Suburbs: *край округ около*

Her job: *своя работа*

Too: *слишком*

Work experience: *работа на полставки*

Successful: *усидчивый*

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates 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 т, 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.

