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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Russian(1RU0)

Paper 4F: Writing in Russian Foundation Tier

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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 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 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 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 15 minutes in length. The paper consisted of three open questions and one translation from English into Russian. Candidates had to answer all questions.

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

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

Candidates had to use the formal register.

Question 3 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 Higher tier.

Question 4 was the translation question. Candidates 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 International and Global Dimension and the topic of Bringing the World Together with content of music events.. Candidates were given a photo of two musicians in St Petersburg – one playing a guitar and one playing the drums; they had to describe the photo and express their opinion about music in about 15-20 words of Russian. The question could be answered using exclusively a present time frame, but candidates were not penalised for using other tenses.

Most candidates 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 candidates described that music was taking place with reference to the instruments being played in the picture and expressed a simple opinion about music.

Some candidates wrote in the first person, which was totally acceptable and some candidates gave opinions on the photo itself. Some candidates made some attempt to describe the clothes being worn but some candidates. Most candidates 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 2a

For the first time an option was given between question 2a and 2b.t

This question addressed the theme of School and the topic of what school is like. Candidates were given four bullet points under the context of giving an opinion on exams for information for a partner school; they had to write 30-35 words of Russian. The question could be answered using present and future time frames, but candidates were not penalised for using other tenses. Some candidates found this question difficult to access, as they appeared not to understand some or all of the bullet points. The first point relating to which subjects were studied was well understood and candidates clearly know the vocabulary for school subjects.

The second point was generally well dealt with but some candidates did not recognise the question word “*когда*”

Point three allowed candidates to give a range of opinions relating to exams and the majority of candidates could give a “*потому что*” or “*так как*” in expanding the response.

The final point was designed to elicit a future tense response in response to the well understood question of future plans. Many candidates scored a mark for this point by referring to future exams or jobs or future study. Some candidates referred to specific plans after exams on the day..

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

Question 2b

For the first time an option was given between question 2a and 2b.t

This question addressed the theme of Identity and Culture and the topic of cultural life referring to sport. Candidates were given four bullet points under the context of sending an email to a director of a sports camp in Russia; they had to write 30-35 words of Russian. The question could be answered using present and future time frames, but candidates were not penalised for using other tenses. Some candidates found this question difficult to access, as they appeared not to understand some or all of the bullet points.

The first point relating to which sports the candidate takes part in was generally well understood and candidates clearly know the vocabulary for school subjects. Some candidates failed to recognise “*занимаетесь*” but still managed to grasp the context of the question.

The second point was generally well dealt with but some candidates did not recognise the question word “*где*”.

Point three allowed candidates to give a range of opinions relating to sport on television but some candidates only gave an opinion either on sport or on television. The majority of candidates could give a “*потому что*” or “*так как*” in expanding the response.

The final point was designed to elicit a future tense response in response to future sporting intention. Many candidates scored a mark for this point by referring to future exams or jobs or future study. Most candidates were clear on the need to express a future intention..

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

Question 3 (a)

This question addresses the theme **future aspirations, study and work** and the topic of **ambitions and future plans**. Candidates are given four bullet points within the context of an article to interest the readers of a Russian magazine about the future plans of young people. They have to write 90-110 words of Russian using past, present and future time frames.

This question was slightly more popular than Q02(b).

The first bullet point requires candidates to explain why they have chosen the subjects that they currently study in school. Stronger responses developed this topic well and gave a range of reasons for the study of school subjects. Less convincing responses merely stated the subjects that the candidate studies or just stated that they like them. This opinion was a part response. The second bullet point requires description of some work/job which candidates have done in the past; it is perfectly acceptable to write about a job that they had commenced in the past and continue to play. It is also acceptable to state that due to age the candidate had not had a job or that the candidate referred to work as some work done in school. The third point requires candidates to talk about what their future intentions are and this allows candidates to demonstrate high ability to this topic. The fourth bullet point requires an opinion on the usefulness of studying at university. Less secure responses talked about the candidates' plans to study at university without referring to the importance of this. Such a response was in effect a continuation of bullet point three.

Many candidates produced some really 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 other candidates failed to read the bullet points carefully e.g. какие предметы ... requires more than one subject unless a full response to only one was proffered. Some candidates merged bullet points 3 and 4.

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 “я думаю что это полезно учиться в университете” does not, on its own, demonstrate effective development of the main idea. About 20 – 25 words per bullet point produces a balanced answer. Content marks were capped by some candidates because they did not cover all bullet points fully. Some candidates listed the subjects they studied without giving a reason why they were being studied. A number of candidates said they had never had a job or done work experience in the past because they were too young. Some candidates said it was useful to study at university because you can get higher education – which is considered to be a reason / justification for this answer.

Question 3 (b)

Q02b addresses the theme of **School**, and the topic of **school activities** focusing on school sports. Candidates are given four bullet points within the context of a Russian school’s request for information about sports offered in their school. They have to write 90-110 words of Russian using past, present and future time frames.

The first bullet point requires candidates to talk about the range of sports on offer in their school. Less secure responses talked about general sports available in any school and thus did not respond to the task. The second bullet point asks the candidate to talk about a sporting event

that they have taken part in in the past. Some candidates failed to appreciate the idea of *мероприятие* and simply talked about sports that they had played. Any reference to a match or tournament allows the candidate to deal successfully with the bullet point. The third bullet requires candidates to discuss the importance of sport in school. Some candidates did not access the full marks for content because they produced generic responses about the importance of sport with no mention of *в школе*. Stronger candidates demonstrated linguistic flair and presented some logical argument with several reasons why it's important to do sports at school. The fourth bullet point asked candidates to talk about which sports they will participate in future with an appropriate reason. It is perfectly acceptable to describe a continuation of current sports played, with reason.

Better answers demonstrated full response with a balanced approach to the four bullet points. Candidates were clearly able to talk about past and future involvement in school sporting events and these bullet points allowed good demonstration of tenses with a good range of vocabulary. Less convincing responses did not develop the second and fourth bullet points. In the second bullet most managed to address the activity of having taken part in sport but failed to make reference to the event. The same issue occurred in bullet point 4, with most managing to write about sports that are played without a future reason given.

Question 4 (a)

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

Candidates 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 a time phrase, the third question required an adverb, the fourth question required adjective and negative and the fifth question required past tense and reason.

Several candidates 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, “*often*”, “*live*”, “*prefer*”, “*weather*”, “*rain*”, “*train*”, “*relax*”. Others found difficulty with grammar, such as prepositions and the past tense of “*хотеть*”.

However, most candidates 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, 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
- 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 *мы*
- 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

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