

GCSE

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Russian (1241)

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Examiners' Report

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Paper 1

Questions 1- 5

These questions were within the capabilities of most candidates, although weaker students were confused between questions 3 and 4 (**карандаш** and **тетрадь**).

Question 6

This question posed few problems for candidates.

Question 7

This was generally well answered, although **сапоги** was not widely known.

Question 8

Most candidates were able to gain marks for the platform numbers but the train departure times proved surprisingly problematic.

Question 9

Excellent performance was demonstrated by almost all candidates on this question.

Question 10

This proved to be a challenging question, where careful listening for detail was not always in evidence.

Question 11

This question posed few problems for candidates. Only the weakest seemed not to know **поезд** or at least to realise that the word **такси** had not been mentioned.

Question 12

Although generally well answered, a number of candidates scored nothing or virtually nothing on this question. The weakest candidates had problems identifying which were boys' and which were girls' names and, in extreme cases, **напишите** was mistaken for a name!

Question 13

A challenging question for many candidates, with Part B, where inferences had to be drawn, taking candidates somewhat by surprise. The words **грустно** and **смешно** were not widely known.

Question 14

Many candidates answered this question well, but not in sufficient detail. Part C required both *school* and *life* for one mark and Part D ii required *advice* about *exams*. For Part E **врач** was widely known but few candidates knew **средства массовой информации**. However, a large number of candidates picked up the reference to **телевидение**. A very small number of candidates attempted to answer this question in Russian, for which no credit could be given.

Almost all candidates attempted all of the questions with some C/D candidates gaining marks in the process. On the whole candidates were well prepared for this examination and were comfortable with various types of questions and rubrics.

Paper 2

The Examining Team had an enjoyable time listening to every candidate's oral presentation. The vast majority of candidates seemed well prepared and there were but a handful who seemed to be unaware of what was expected of them.

Home and Abroad was probably the most popular topic chosen by candidates as their prepared theme, affording them an obvious link with past and with future plans. (Bad British weather appears to be the reason for most holidaying abroad!) That said, it did not seem that centres had prepared all candidates to opt for the same topic as on some previous occasions. People's ideal homes or holidays were popular, letting candidates use some rather extensive vocabulary and this often helped raise the content mark in this section.

Education/employment allowed students to refer to their school, timetable and future plans, many of whom either mentioned university aspirations or intentions to work abroad, though not necessarily with Russian.

There must be countless families in the UK who have sparkling clean cars, as many candidates said they earned pocket money by washing them! Daily routine questions were generally done well, though many (understandably with aspects) stumbled when asked what they had done that particular morning.

Some excitement was generated when candidates gave opinions on whether too much time was spent watching TV. 'Harry Potter' is still the favourite film mentioned, but the odd candidate referred to train-spotting or stamp-collecting as their hobby, proving to the examiners that they had researched these unusual areas of vocabulary. Centres might wish to encourage students to bring in a little more of the non-standard themes, as opposed to cinema, football and computer games. It is always pleasant to hear something out of the ordinary when possible.

Another pleasing trend was the more enlightened responses to healthy eating, combined with extra sport. Many added to this by mentioning where, how often and for how long they did these activities. Interestingly, most candidates said they themselves did not smoke, but didn't mind others smoking around them.

To summarise, the content: the 'bread and butter' information we all teach, has to be there, but anything additional that enhances a 'good' answer might well take it into the 'very good' category.

The only negative side reported by virtually all members of the examining team is the casual way some centres deal with administration. Delays occurred this year where centres whose candidate(s) had withdrawn did not send off the Attendance List, meaning many phone calls and e-mails were required to clarify the situation. Examination Officers might benefit from being reminded of this matter. It clearly states in the Edexcel handbook, which is produced to assist centres conduct the test correctly, that a maximum of 4 minutes for each topic (meaning 8-12 minutes in total) suffices to elicit the information, vocabulary, tenses and so on from candidates. Going well beyond that does not usually help and in fact, on most occasions it tires and puts pressure on students. Those centres who have no Russian teacher but invite others to conduct the oral exams should please ensure that the visitor understands how to conduct the examination. It is the centre's responsibility to confirm that conversations have actually been recorded and that everything has been adhered to, otherwise errors after the tape recordings have been made cannot be corrected (e.g. where only 2 topics were tested). Examiners can only go on the information they have on the tape. Some centres choose to have a member of the languages team present to deal with such eventualities.

Finally, the examining team would like to thank the vast majority of teachers, who not only did everything as the handbook requires, but who did so by making the conversations pleasant and natural, by not sticking rigidly to the sample questions printed (they are for guidance and should not be used for the exam itself).

Paper 3

Question 1

No major problems although some centres were weak on body vocabulary and there was often confusion between нога and рука

Question 2

Despite the fact that the letter B was unclear on the picture, no problems were caused. Weaker candidates confused skating and skiing.

Question 3

Some centres dealt with this well. But there were vocabulary issues with others. Искусство писатель were not known and there was little awareness that физкультура was the same as физическая культура

Question 4

This was capably done in general, but the weakest candidates unsurprisingly found it testing

Question 5

This was done well, although many overlooked the word купить in the question and ticked б . Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions thoroughly, not just look at the pictures.

Question 6

The best candidates read the question carefully and performed well. Weaker candidates showed evidence of guesswork and in (i) were not aware of the past tense; in (ii) overlooked the нет животных; in (vii) никогда was either ignored or not understood.

Question 7

This caused few problems.

Question 8

Able candidates coped well with this question. (iv) was not often picked by weaker candidates, perhaps because диплом was not understood.

Question 9

As usual this type of question caused the most difficulty. Only the most able scored full marks. It was clear that many candidates had been encouraged to look at the grammar, which was good, but sometimes caused problems eg начать instead of стать. Candidates should be reminded to give only the required number of answers.

Question 10

This was the most testing question and the best at differentiating between candidates requiring detailed knowledge and some inference.

The standard of English was generally acceptable, but many native speaker candidates lost marks here either because their written English was poor or because they did not properly understand the question.

- (i) a common error was 'legend' or 'first woman in space'
- (ii) this was one of the most successful questions - some candidates did not realise the relevance of face
- (iii) more difficult than anticipated - common answers were 'married/was friends with Yuri Gagarin (one even put Uri Geller)! Or 'went on TV'
- (iv) Surprisingly банка was not recognised by the majority of candidates. There were lots of guesses and many 'conservative banks'
- (v) Despite failing to answer (iv) correctly, this was mostly well answered (maybe due to accurate guessing).
- (vi) Not a successful question. There were many guesses including 'she was the only one to do it' ; 'she flew to the moon'; 'she orbited the earth'
- (vii) For both marks candidates had to understand that she **spoke** about **herself/her private life** for the first time. There was some confusion as to whether she starred in a film
- (viii) Most candidates had little problem with this. This was a C grade question.

In general the paper gave an accurate reflection of the range of ability and appeared to be fair and accessible with a range of vocabulary and topics covered.

Candidates still need to be reminded to present their work neatly and legibly.

Paper 4

There were many reasons for the examining team to be pleased with candidates' performance this year, as centres seem to be preparing them well for their Writing Component.

Question 1

Very rarely were answers not accepted; occasionally candidates left lines blank and therefore lost marks. A very few candidates repeated *рисование*, not having read the example. While the majority of candidates scored full marks on this question, the high proportion of spelling mistakes, even from very good candidates, suggested that this was perhaps a topic area that had not been revised for some time. This year, as long as the school subjects could be understood by a 'sympathetic Russian', we accepted the responses. Centres are reminded that with a more general theme in Question 1, only one spelling error per answer is accepted.

Question 2

A high percentage of candidates scored full marks on this question, having covered all the bullet points in their answers and written in good Russian. Some answers were overly long, communicating a great deal of detail about the new friend, but omitted to mention one or two bullet points. Even weaker candidates seemed reassured by the very clear structure of the question and the relatively straightforward vocabulary required. Almost all candidates were able to attempt all points of the question to some degree. Several learner candidates had problems with 'Saturday'. Many weaker candidates had difficulty distinguishing between *he is* and *he has* in Russian, often writing *он голубые глаза от*, conversely, *у него высокий*.

Question 3

Strong candidates produced some imaginative and entertaining responses to this question. Weaker candidates also responded well, with most being able to make at least an attempt at all of the points. Most learner and non-learner candidates expanded successfully on each point, or on the majority of points, and so were able to access higher marks.

A significant number of candidates did not, however, appear to understand that they should describe *what* the prize consisted of before going on to describe *how* they had won it. Many candidates used the past tense verb given in the stimulus (*я выиграл(а)*) in their answers well, but some did not use any other verbs in the past tense. It is important that they remember that the Russian stimulus is given as well as the English as it can help them.

Some candidates had difficulty explaining in Russian what their family thought about the prize, and *моя мама хорошо* was a disappointingly common attempt at this point.

The best candidates had clearly been trained to include a wide variety of structures and concisely address each bullet point in turn, linking the whole piece together coherently. The question was imaginatively answered by many candidates, with an interesting variety of prizes and methods of winning them. Many answers were selfless, involving giving away prizes to deserving relatives or orphanages or even their own schools.

Question 4a

There were comparatively few answers to this question. Many native speaker candidates attempted it, although some did not cover fully the points mentioned in the stimulus, therefore lost marks. The best answers from learner candidates incorporated narration of a series of events that occurred during the awful trip to Moscow and demonstrated an ability to manipulate the language.

Some weaker candidates reproduced pre-learned essays which were rarely relevant to the question. These often described a holiday abroad (occasionally entirely irrelevant), but rarely addressed the idea that the trip was an awful one. Where candidates had manipulated the essay they had learnt to suit the rubric, they scored much higher marks for communication and content. Although most accounts involved lost baggage at the airport, unhelpful Russians, bad weather and poor accommodation, one excellent and very interesting account involved the author being attacked by a gorilla at the city zoo!

A number of stronger candidates did produce some impressive answers and responded well to the almost total freedom the question gave them to invent scenarios. One or two candidates, however, got so involved with their disaster stories that they forgot to talk about their plans for the coming summer!

The only slightly disappointing aspect of this question was that answers tended to be rather thin on opinions, despite the fact that the rubric asked for their thoughts on what had occurred.

Question 4b

The vast majority of candidates, both learner and native speaker, opted for this question, appearing to favour the security of its more structured approach. Many candidates addressed each of the bullet points fully and went beyond minimum responses, as many had been well rehearsed in writing about their town or area. Some answers did not mention the climate, despite this being in the first bullet point, and some did not distinguish clearly between what tourists might find interesting in the town and what young people could find to do. There was a range of good responses to the fourth bullet point, with many candidates demonstrating an ability to manipulate verbs in the past tense. A few candidates failed to spot that *на прошлой неделе* means *last week*, and wrote answers to this part of the question in the future tense.

The last bullet point was perhaps addressed less well than the others. Some candidates misunderstood the stimulus and wrote what they would be doing in the future, while others did not quite grasp the idea that it was their opinion on how the town might be made more interesting that was being sought. The best candidates adapted the stimulus to help them to write a good answer.

It was disheartening to note that some candidates in some centres did not attempt either question 4a or question 4b. Even weaker candidates benefited from attempting one of these questions, many gaining up to 6 or 7 more marks.

Candidates seem to be well prepared for most of what is required of them in Paper 4 and the examining team was impressed by the standard of their work in this paper.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	86	72	58	45	38	31	25	19	0

(NB each paper is worth 25% of the total)

Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 1 grade boundaries	50	39	34	29	24	20	17	14	11	0

Paper 2 Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 1 grade boundaries	20	19	16	13	10	8	6	5	4	0

Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	50	40	33	26	19	17	15	13	11	0

Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	55	50	41	32	24	20	16	12	8	0

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