

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCSE

GCSE Russian (1241)

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1241 Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Questions 1-5 were generally very well answered, with the exception of question 3, where even good candidates seemed not to know **пляж**.

Questions 6-10 were answered well.

Question 11 allowed most candidates who attempted it to gain marks, although **дети** was not widely known. Candidates could be reminded that where numbers are required, figures, as opposed to words, are acceptable in answers.

Question 12 was generally well answered, although some candidates were confused by the use of the instrumental case in **шкафом**.

Question 13 served to differentiate between good and weaker candidates. Parts **a** and **б** were answered correctly most frequently.

Question 14 posed few problems for the majority of candidates.

Question 15 was answered correctly by many candidates.

Question 16 may have confused some candidates with its format (however, a similar style was used in the recent past). Almost all candidates answered part **б** and it is difficult to discern which candidates were affected by this confusion.

Question 17 was answered well.

Question 18 provided an opportunity for most candidates to gain some marks. However, a number of satisfactory to good candidates failed to gain marks on parts **iv** and **v**.

Question 19 was not attempted by a small number of candidates, thus leaving them unable to access any of the marks available. Similarly, a small number of native speakers could not be given any credit because they answered in Russian. Question **c** seemed to pose the most problems, with a number of very good candidates missing the idea of “willing” or “ready” to work. A number of native speakers confused “interesting” with “interested”. In question **e** “классики” was sometimes taken to mean classical music and “мода” to mean modelling. Question **f** saw a number of candidates struggle with the notion of playing “only” or “always” for Russia.

1241 Paper 2 Speaking

Overall, the level of candidates' performance was encouraging, with most seeming to be well prepared and sympathetically guided through the exam, providing opportunities for students to show off their tenses and ability to answer open-ended questions.

Some weaker candidates were allowed to give excessively long presentations on topic 1 (some as long as 4 minutes), presumably because the teacher-examiner (TE) knew they would struggle once they moved on to questions and answers. It is worth highlighting that this does not advantage the candidate, as the better Communication and Content marks can only be accessed through the production of a

Dialogue

Native speaker examiners continue not to realise the importance to candidates' eventual marks of ensuring that the relevant boxes are ticked in terms of range of tenses, opinions, justifications, etc. It is also worth noting that it is entirely possible that, if, for example, a candidate's only future occurs in minute 6 of Topic 1, it could quite justifiably not count as the TE is entirely within his / her rights not to have listened to the topic up to that point.

There was less in the way of poor examining than last year, although there is still a significant minority of teacher-examiners who appear not to have read the examiners' handbook. Learner centres (generally) continue to be rather better organised than those with native speaker candidates. It would be nice to hear of more hopes and aspirations for the future, in addition to plans for future work or holidays.

Most students did a presentation at the start on a variety of topics but perhaps the most popular was House, Home and Daily Routine. 'At Home and Abroad' was next most popular area for Conversation 1, followed by 'Social Activities, Fitness and Health'. More teacher-examiners seemed to ask about the health part of this topic area than in previous years.

It is worth indicating that when a candidate is stuck, instead of the teacher-examiner helping or encouraging, some just plough on and on with questions. This has the effect of making the candidate clam up completely and score nothing. A happy medium needs to be found whereby the teacher-examiner can offer some help to encourage the students but without providing all the answers.

But overall candidates were well prepared. Some teacher-examiners let students use too much of their prepared materials in the 2nd and 3rd conversations which sounded more like another monologue rather than a discussion. Some tried to avoid the higher level questions altogether.

There were a lot of errors in using the verbs " учиться и изучать" with nouns in the right cases. A common error was using the word "sport" in the instrumental in all possible cases (Я люблю спортом. В школе есть спортом.) Another common mistake was the use of the verb "кататься" - конькаться на лыжах, конькаться на лодке, лыжаться на коньках.

The team of Examiners would like to thank the vast majority of centres for their co-operation and to remind them that only one copy of the LT3 for each candidate need be sent with the tapes. This form can be downloaded from the Edexcel website.

1241 Paper 3 Listening and Responding

Questions 1 and 2 proved accessible to the vast majority of candidates, although it was surprising that many, even some of the better candidates, did not know *входа нет*.

Question 3 was aimed at mainly C candidates, but many found it more difficult than expected. Part (iii) proved the most testing with only the more able understanding the time phrases.

Question 4 proved to be a good indicator of the most able, although all candidates must be encouraged to attempt all questions. It was pleasing to see that very few students left gaps.

Question 5 was answered well.

Question 6 was answered better than the similar question last year and clearly showed the difference between the more able and the weaker candidates. The vast majority of candidates either answered all parts correctly or not at all. Very few candidates were able to use either grammatical or context clues. Some native speaker candidates lost marks unnecessarily by not using the options in the box.

Question 7 proved accessible to most candidates although some did not seem to know *продукты*.

Question 8 caused no problems, most candidates gaining full marks.

Question 9 as usual proved to be the most challenging. Candidates were asked to recognise points of view and draw inferences from a text containing unfamiliar vocabulary.

Questions **a, b and c** caused few problems and it was pleasing to see many candidates who understood *одинокие*. However some candidates did not know the word *институт* and guessed institution.

Question **d** proved difficult for some. A surprising number of candidates did not recognise the name Maxim. They were confused by the genitive case, concluding that Maxima was either a girl or a place. Some thought that it was Maxine and others thought there was a link between Maxim and maximum, leading to the conclusion that Viktor was in a maximum security institution.

Candidates should be encouraged to be precise in their answers. Several lost marks by not mentioning the **arrival** of Maxim.

Questions **e and f** were answered correctly by many candidates. Some confused elevators with escalators and the number 16 with 60. Again some candidates lost marks by not being precise. They needed to mention it was the **first** giraffe to be born in Russia. For question f they needed to mention both Western and Europe to gain the marks. Several candidates wrote Great Britain presumably confusing Великобритания with великолепные and it was surprising that a significant number did not know the points of the compass.

Questions **g and h**. It was a shame that some candidates lost marks by not giving all the details or by being too vague especially in question h. “ It gives information about stuff”.

Generally a pleasing response. Most candidates are trained to read the questions carefully and answer thoughtfully. Some apparently native speakers lost marks due to poor understanding of the question or poor written English.

1241 Paper 4 Writing

Question 1.

Most candidates managed to name 5 items of clothing although some chose other items you could wear such as очки or сумка. There was quite a lot of confusion between шаф and шкаф and a few candidates transliterated English words for clothes using the Cyrillic alphabet. We encountered various spellings of джинсы.

Pupils should be made aware that they do not get marks for copying the example and that writing skirt and mini skirt in Russian, for example, would not merit 2 marks. There was quite a limited range of vocabulary on offer for the most part, suggesting that many candidates had not covered this topic recently.

Question 2.

This was generally done well. The best answers were concise and focused. Some candidates wrote far too extensively and had misunderstood the point of the exercise. Vocabulary was adequate to the task in all but very few cases. However, the spelling of numbers was disappointingly poor.

Most candidates coped well but some didn't read the task and wrote what they did with a friend in the past or what they will do in the future and that affected their marks for Communication and Content. Candidates were not penalised for incorrect tenses in this question, but many weaker candidates lost marks because their sentence construction was weak. There were not many learner candidates who could handle the sentence construction required for the last bullet point well.

Question 3.

This question was generally well attempted by most candidates, although the tripartite nature of the first bullet point tended to fox a large number of candidates and emphasises the importance of drilling pupils in examination technique. There were many good comprehensive answers about school subjects and reasons. This topic is obviously taught thoroughly! Some candidates wrote about their opinion of their uniform but did not go into detail, which was a shame.

The bullet point that was least well executed was the one about homework, with many struggling to write in the past tense or say in the tense when giving extra info such as it was boring/hard etc. There were some excellent answers, however, particularly from those who were able to say that they had little homework now other than the preparation of exams. The fourth bullet point was handled well by most candidates, with many recognising that there is a variety of structures which can be used to denote future time - *я собираюсь, я хочу* and *я буду* were all accepted. Many knew how to link their piece together into a coherent passage.

Centres should warn candidates against being too brief as, in contrast to question 2, marks are given here for the ability to expand, narrate etc. Some very respectable answers which were accurate and fluent did not get full marks because the responses were too perfunctory in nature. Candidates should also be warned against making omissions - all bullet points must be addressed to obtain full marks. Many excellent responses lacked an opinion on a subject the candidate disliked, for example and it was a great shame to have to penalise candidates for this.

Question 4a.

This question was generally only attempted at the ends of the spectrum. Some good native speaker candidates produced full, imaginative and entertaining answers, while a number of very weak candidates made only the beginnings of an attempt at a response to the question. One or two learner candidates who attempted a fuller response misinterpreted the question and chose to talk about their ideal jobs or about their experiences of work-experience placements. Many candidates didn't understand the task correctly and produced essays arguing the case for either work or study rather than arguing the case for or against working whilst studying. Nevertheless, quite a few candidates produced good work and interesting arguments.

Less able candidates tended to run out of steam part way through the answer with the word limit not being met in many cases and not many opinions expressed with repetitive language to try and fill the word count. However, many candidates showed an ability to use some quite complicated constructions. There were examples of learner candidates using the conditional, gerunds and correct case forms after various prepositions. This was all very encouraging.

Question 4b.

This was by far the more popular option for question 4 and examiners were impressed by many answers, with some outstanding responses from learner candidates. Tenses were done well here with many able to write in the past, future and conditional coherently and confidently. The exceptions to this were usually in writing about the weather in the past (mentioned in a previous report) and giving opinions in the past. Candidates seemed able to show a variety of language and structures. Many, however, missed the superlative and lost marks for not writing about their best ever holiday. One or two candidates wrote as if this holiday had not yet taken place, which did not show full understanding of the question, as did the candidates who wrote negatively about their best ever holiday! Despite some impressive language, these could not score full marks because they did not address the question.

Many candidates weighed up the ideas of whether a hotel was a good place to stay or not, and whether it was better to go with parents or friends. This showed a good use of the stimulus and provided an opportunity for candidates to give and justify opinions. Many showed a clear ability to manipulate verb forms and some essays were very impressive in their use of a variety of constructions. It was encouraging to read about the amount of pupils who had visited Russia on a school trip and wrote about it as their best holiday ever. Verbs of motion, again, were not strong in many cases.

Overall, a good set of responses from the vast majority of candidates! Examiners hope that centres will take on board suggestions made here for further future success in the writing examination.

Statistics

Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 1 grade boundaries	50	38	33	28	24	20	17	14	11	0

Paper 2 Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	20	19	16	13	10	8	5	5	4	0

Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 3 grade boundaries	50	36	31	26	21	18	16	14	12	0

Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 4 grade boundaries	55	45	37	29	21	17	13	10	7	0

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	81	69	57	45	38	31	25	19	0

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

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