

What happened to Highers?

The SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) withdrew national courses in Russian language when the examinations syllabus was revised in 2015. National courses are the main senior school qualifications in Scotland and comprise National 4 and 5, Higher and Advanced Higher examinations. Russian is now only available as a Languages for Life and Work Award at beginner and intermediate level. More information on the exam system: www.sqa.org.uk.



The problem

Uptake of Russian has been declining since the late 1970s. By the 90s the proportion of candidates who were "heritage" speakers of Russian was growing and they quickly began to account for the majority. As their numbers grew there was even a modest growth in total entries from about 2010. However Russian was dealt its final death blow by the SQA decision that year to phase out national course examinations by 2015.

In consequence there is almost no Russian taught in Scottish schools because schools are unlikely to offer a non-examinable subject.

A vicious circle results. If Russian is not on the school curriculum it may be seen by pupils, parents and teachers to be irrelevant and unimportant, and thus becomes even less likely to be adopted. It is important to reverse this perception: Russian is very relevant politically, economically and culturally.

"The availability of exams is vital both in terms of maintaining opportunities for pupils to learn lesser-taught languages such as Japanese and Russian, and as a way in which schools can support and recognise the multilingual skills of pupils who have access to another language in their homes or communities. Withdrawal of accreditation opportunities for lesser-taught languages will almost certainly lead to these languages no longer being taught in or supported by schools."

[Language Trends 2015-16](#) (page 8)

Timeline

1966-75: average annual entries for Highers Russian - 182

1976-85: average annual entries for Highers Russian - 73

1986-95: average annual entries for Highers Russian - 31

1996-2005: average annual entries for Highers Russian - 16

2006-2015: average annual entries for Highers Russian - 26 (cf French 4465, Spanish 1536, German 1227, Italian 214)

(source: SQA Statistics)

2008: The last Advanced Higher Russian examination

2010: The SQA announced that Russian would not be included in the new national courses menu to be launched in 2015-16 in line with the Curriculum for Excellence. They said Russian uptake and demand from interested parties (schools and parents, government, employers, trades unions) was not sufficient to justify the cost of maintaining the examinations.

Russian would be included in Languages for Life and Work qualifications.

2015: The last national course examinations (from Access to Higher) in Russian.

2015-16: Two schools offer Russian at beginner level in SQA Languages for Life and Work, and a third plans to offer it in 2016-17. A few independent boarding schools and supplementary schools offer GCSE and A Level qualifications to their (mostly Russian-speaking) pupils.

What did the Scotland-Russia Forum do about it?

- 2010: The SRF wrote to the SQA, government ministers and the HEFC arguing for the retention of Russian. We also had a meeting with the CEO of SQA.
- A Parliamentary motion 16 August 2010 was lodged by Robin Harper MSP:
Cessation of Courses in Russian Language for all Scottish Schools
That the Parliament notes with concern the decision made by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to stop issuing national courses in Russian by 2015; recognises with regret that no Scottish state school offers a course in Russian; further notes that Scotland is now unique in Europe in its lack of provision of courses in Russian language in schools, and believes that this has had a knock-on effect on the provision of Russian in further and higher education; believes that at a cultural, political, historical, and business level, young Scottish people starting in careers that involve travelling and working in Russia, the former Soviet Union, the Baltic states and the far eastern states where Russian is still lingua franca will be at a disadvantage, and urges the Government to meet with all concerned to see what can be done to address what is already a very serious situation. Motion S3M-06824, <http://bit.ly/2mwl6Wz>
- 2010-11: The SRF compiled a list of arguments from supporters - see [Messages of support](#) for our campaign below.
- Oct 2012: The SRF sent a [submission](#) to the Scottish Parliament European and External Relations Committee inquiry on learning foreign languages in primary schools. We argued for the inclusion of Russian in the languages offered to school students.
- Dec 2012: [Report on lesser-taught modern languages in Scotland and recommendations for reintroducing Russian to Scotland's schools](#). Report by Mary Bailes, University of Glasgow, for the SRF. Sponsored by CRCEES.
- 9 February 2017: Scottish Parliament Motion S5M-03971 on ***Cessation of Courses in Russian Language for all Scottish Schools*** (a re-submission of Motion S3M-06824 - see 16 August 2010 above) was lodged by Andy Wightman MSP. <http://bit.ly/2lGXfWB>
- Ongoing: *Russian in Scotland* continues SRF's work, offering Russian "tasters" to primary and secondary schools all over Scotland. If your school is interested please contact us. See also [Russian in schools](#).

If anyone reading this would like to contribute ideas and otherwise help our campaign to get Russian back into schools please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#). Thank you!

Messages of support for the Scotland-Russia Forum campaign to reinstate the examinations in 2010-11

[politicians](#)
[Russian officials](#)
[teachers and lecturers](#)

[students](#)
[linguists](#)
[business](#)

[others](#)

Politicians

It would be unwise and very short-sighted to deprive Scottish pupils of the opportunity to study the Russian language. I very much hope this proposal can be reconsidered. **Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP; Hon. President of the Scotland-Russia Forum.**

I have lodged the following motion for debate in the Scottish Parliament:

Parliament notes with concern the decision of the SQA to stop issuing national courses in Russian by 2015, recognises with regret that no State school in Scotland now offers a course in Russian, further notes that Scotland is now unique in Europe in its lack of provision of courses in Russian Language in Schools, and that this has had a knock on effect on the provision of Russian in further and higher education, believes that at a cultural, political, historical, and business level, young Scottish people starting on careers that involve travelling and working in Russia, the former Soviet Union, Baltic states and far eastern states, where Russian is still a lingua franca will be at a disadvantage, and urges the Government to meet with all concerned to see what can be done to address what is already a very serious situation. **Robin Harper MSP, Scottish Parliament**

Removing Russian from the list of exam options will force Scottish students wanting to learn Russian to sit English exams rather than Scottish qualifications. At a time when more and more students want to study the language, this move seems very short-sighted. **Des McNulty MSP, Labour Party education spokesman, Scottish Parliament**

Discontinuing SQA exams in Russian after 2015 would be extremely short sighted and I fully support the campaign to retain them. **Mike Pringle MSP, Scottish Parliament**

I regret the SQA announcement that they intend to abandon courses in Russian in 2015.

I believe this to be a backward step for several reasons, as a knowledge of Russia, its language, its culture, its history and its aspiration are important now and will be even more so for future generations and notwithstanding it is important for Russia, Britain and Scotland, to take a long-term view in terms of developing and building relationships.

To remove from the machinery of relationship building the oil of language teaching, seems short sighted and short of ambition for Scotland, particularly as we here in Scotland and have Ayrshire have so much in common through a shared appreciation of Robert Burns, our national poet, and the recently erected memorial at Lendalfoot to the memory of the Varyag and its valiant crew.

I am dismayed therefore at what I see as a backward step being taken by the SQA and hope they will change their mind before this decision is implemented. **John Scott MSP, Cross-Party Group on Russia, Scottish Parliament**

Russian officials

The Russian language is one of the world's most widespread languages.

There are more than 300 million Russian speakers all over the world, 170 million of them being native speakers. The language possesses official status in a number of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as in Russia itself. The same is true for a number of international organisations such as the UN, UNESCO, IAEA, BRIC, OSCE and many others. Obviously, knowledge of Russian provides access to professional and business opportunities in a significant and ever developing part of the world as well as to a rich and vibrant culture.

The 1990s saw a decline in the study of Russian abroad, that's true.

Nowadays, however, we can see a surge in its popularity. The Central and Eastern European countries are good examples of that: they were the first to abandon Russian 20 years ago but changed their attitude recently. And more and more students come to Russia from Western Europe and North America to study the language. For Scotland, a country famous for its outward-looking economy, world-level attractions and high educational standards, teaching Russian looks essential as well.

Thus, we consider maintaining the Russian language teaching system in Scotland, including the SQA National Courses in Russian which are crucial for that, to be beneficial both for our relations and for the personal development of the Scottish people. We also encourage any actions aimed at supporting the language and appreciate all the efforts made by the Scotland-Russia Forum.

Sergey Krutikov, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Edinburgh

The Russkiy Mir Foundation is a non-governmental Russian organisation concerned with the popularisation of Russian language and culture as a crucial element of world civilization, support for Russian language study programs abroad, the development of cross-cultural dialogue and the strengthening of understanding between cultures and peoples.

We have opened two Russian Centres in the UK: at Pushkin House in London and at the University of Edinburgh and are working on two more.

We wholeheartedly support the Scotland-Russia Forum's campaign to bring Russian back to the school curriculum in Scotland, and to preserve the school examinations.

Interest in the Russian language and in Russian culture is growing worldwide. It would be regrettable and illogical if Scottish schoolchildren were not given the opportunity to find out about our beautiful language and rich culture. **Dr Alexey Gromyko, European Programmes Manager, Russkiy Mir Foundation; Deputy Director, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences**

Teachers and lecturers

I support the SRF campaign to keep SQA Russian exams. **Prof. Richard Berry, Director of the Centre for Russian Central and East European Studies, University of Glasgow**

I am so disappointed at the narrow-mindedness that has led the SQA to consider dropping Russian from the list of languages available to both school pupils and adult learners in Scotland.

It is particularly disappointing to see this happen at a point when there might just be more opportunities for the teaching of minority languages in Scottish schools. The flexibility to curriculum and timetable that is being discussed in many schools could in the future mean that viable classes can be formed.

My recent experience of re-introducing Russian to Fortrose Academy has been an extremely positive one. I was able to present a group of S6 pupils at Int 1 level in 2006 & 2010, with all pupils achieving excellent results. I have another group in S6 this session and also a group of S2 pupils doing a Russian block until Christmas. It is often perceived as a difficult language to learn but I hope that before I retire I will be able to change that attitude a little.

We have established a link with a school in Perm in the Urals and have been there three times now, with the Russians visiting us twice. In many ways this has been the most rewarding part of what I have been trying to achieve. Our pupils have made lasting friendships and have gained an insight into Russian life, how they live and how they think. Without some knowledge of the language this would not have been so successful.

The Scottish government has chosen to promote the learning of Mandarin so that Scotland is equipped to deal with the development of commercial links between Scotland and China. Surely they must be aware of the potential market in Russia, yet there has been no move to re-instate Russian in schools. Scotland has many historical links with Russia, yet it is not a country that many are familiar with. It is a major world power and a country that we surely want to work with in the future. Of course we can learn and teach Russian without sitting exams but I fear that the message that is being sent out by bodies such as the SQA will not encourage this. The interest in the Russian

language and Russian culture is there if the opportunity is given. **Anne Boyer, Russian teacher, Fortrose Academy**

I think that the SQA decision to abandon exams in Russian from 2015 should be reversed. In the last five years all Russian departments at Scottish universities have been attracting a growing number of applicants (this fact alone demonstrates that there is a steady interest in Russian) and have accepted many pupils from Scotland. Given the fact that many schools in Scotland would like to start teaching Russian again and that the business and cultural contacts between Russia and Scotland are growing, it is important to keep teaching the Russian language in Scotland at all levels. **Dr. Alexandra Smith, Reader in Russian, University of Edinburgh**

The absence of Russian from the curriculum of Scottish schools is to be deeply regretted. Scotland is one of the only European countries not to offer Russian as a foreign language at school level. Staff at the University of St Andrews, where the popularity of Russian amongst undergraduates continues to rise, consider the SQA's decision to withdraw exams in Russian to be extremely unhelpful. Scotland, and its educational institutions, need to understand the importance of providing people with the opportunity to better communicate with and understand Russia. This will pay enormous dividends in cultural and economic terms. We would urge the SQA to review its decision to withdraw Russian and would fully support the re-introduction of Russian into Scottish schools. **Dr Roger Keys and Dr Claire Whitehead, Department of Russian, University of St Andrews**

The decision of the SQA to stop offering examinations in Russian is extremely disappointing. It seems particularly perverse to take this decision at a time when interest in Russian is growing and, indeed, when there has been an increase in numbers taking Russian Higher. If implemented, this decision will bring to a halt attempts being made to revive Russian as a mainstream school subject and can only exacerbate the already dire situation of language learning in Scotland. **Dr John Dunn, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Glasgow**

Russian is such a beautiful and colourful language as I'm sure anyone who has studied it will testify. I would love to see more schools in Scotland teach it. The children of Scotland would miss a fantastic opportunity to learn a language that sits comfortably with Scottish accents and dialects. It would be a great loss to see it disappear from the education system in Scotland. **Mary Ward, Promotion of Scotland and Tourism, Scottish Government**

Please add my name to the list of supporters of the campaign to keep Russian Language on the school exams diet. At a time of financial restraint, it is counter productive to restrict even further our capacity to trade with such a large group of nations as the Russian speaking block and removing the possibility of examining or studying Russian at school level will diminish that capacity even further. **Tim Steward, languages consultant, Edinburgh**

I taught Russian in Glasgow for 36 years, but I no longer have a vested interest in the subject. Nonetheless, I would be heartbroken if Russian was, in effect, banned from schools all over Scotland. Russia is going through a bad patch, but whether its leadership is our friend, partner or opponent, the country is bound to play a crucial cultural and political role in the new millennium. It would be disgracefully shortsighted to reduce the number of people in Scotland who know the Russian language. **Martin Dewhirst, Honorary Research Fellow, Glasgow University**

We have written to ask the SQA to reconsider their decision to abandon National Courses in Russian, which we've recently heard of with our deepest concern and regret.

Russian Edinburgh is a recognised Scottish Charity founded in 2004 by a group of parents with its main purpose being to help the successful integration of bilingual children and their families to life in Scotland. Russian Edinburgh runs a supplementary Saturday school in Edinburgh and has recently expanded to Dundee reaching over 100 pupils aged from 2 to 16.

Recent international studies have demonstrated the vast abilities of bi-lingual children and we are keen to support our pupils' development throughout, from as young as two years old to their early career. Russian Edinburgh targets youngsters with a keen interest in the Russian language, both heritage and non-heritage learners. We see Russian language learning supported by SQA assessment as a vital milestone for our youngsters, opening a wide window of opportunities in their future life.

Our pupils have been taking the SQA exams at Drummond Community High School, our host organisation, every year since 2006 and have always achieved top grades. Therefore Russian Edinburgh accounts for 5% to 10% of SQA exams in Russian in Scotland every year, even though the majority of our pupils have not yet reached the assessment age (90% of our pupils are younger than 14). This year we increased the SQA's uptake in Russian by 100%! **Dr Vasily Demyanov, Russian Edinburgh supplementary school**

I am greatly saddened to hear that it is currently being considered to stop offering Russian as a part of Scotland's examination system. I hope some creative way can be found to support young people in the Scottish education system who develop a passion for Russian. **Jon Drury, Head of Russian, Sevenoaks School**

I have written to the SQA to express my concern at their plans to discontinue national courses in Russian. My arguments were based on politics and economics; on both accounts Russia is a major player, and as I know from personal experience (having started learning Russian while at school in Scotland, continued to a degree at St Andrews and then spent 15 years using Russian in my career) there is no doubt that mastery of the language enables the creation of more robust relationships, at a personal, business and political level.

Greater understanding of Russia, which can only be achieved through knowledge of the language, will remain important for many years. Without offering such study to our children, Scotland will miss out. I fully support the SQA's campaign to have this decision reversed. **Rebecca Trengove, St Andrews**

I am writing as a university lecturer and former external examiner for SYS Russian to add my voice to the appeal to reconsider the retention of Russian teaching in Scottish schools on the following grounds:

1. Russian was considered strategically important in the Cold War period. But far more Russian speakers are needed in the post-Cold War world, with the expansion of trade. The strategic importance to the UK has not gone away – Russian dominance of oil and gas as well as other aspects of the situation in the FSU reinforce the strategic significance of Russian as a language.
2. Study of Russian has contributed to the intellectual development of many able and distinguished figures in our national life.
3. There are arguments for and against learning most languages. Some are seen as easier (Spanish), some are undoubtedly difficult (Chinese). It is important that languages in schools should be seen as reinforcing each other rather than as competing, and the distinction between 'minority' and 'majority' languages should be abandoned.
4. There is an extensive pool of experienced teachers of Russian in schools already, who are keen to teach Russian but are deprived of the opportunity to do so.
5. The historical relationship which has existed between Scotland and Russia differs from that of the UK and Russia or England and Russia. It has been much closer in a number of fields, both cultural and commercial.

Finally - it is worth noting that Russian in Scottish universities is not faring particularly well either as market influences permeate universities, to the detriment of the greater good. The undergraduate and Masters degrees in Russian in my institution were closed down some years ago on financial grounds, as also happened in Strathclyde. Both of these courses had a practical bent and produced graduates who were well equipped to enter occupations where a knowledge of Russian was an asset. If Russian is phased out in schools the situation in the Scottish universities where Russian has managed to cling on can only deteriorate, to the detriment of our national life and economy. **J. Halliday, Senior Lecturer, Heriot-Watt University**

I would like to add my voice to the many who have already contributed to this campaign. There is little that I can add to what has been said by the many colleagues and friends who have already spoken up, except to say that, having taught Russian at Edinburgh University for 40 years, I have seen in that period many ups and downs in the level of interest, but Russia remains a colossus in terms of its culture and history and more recently it has become one of the most important

emerging markets in which many British speakers of Russian are already involved. **Michael Falchikov, formerly Senior Lecturer in Russian, University of Edinburgh**

I started learning Russian in my last year at school and loved it, partly just because it was "different" and had a "funny" alphabet. But the alphabet, once you learn it, is so much easier and more logical than our own. The grammar is a bit complicated, but no worse than German or French. A bit of a challenge is surely no bad thing: we can't have everything simplified and predigested.

And it has such a lovely sound to it, whether singing it or whispering "golubushka moya" into someone's ear. And their poetry and literature are magical, even if you don't get beyond a few simple bits of Pushkin and translations of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. At least you know how to pronounce the unfamiliar names and patronymics.

"Yes, but what practical use is it?" I personally don't take that as a valid question: what use are Beethoven and Renoir and the distant view of the Cuillins in Skye? But all right: it makes your trips to Russia, on business or for pleasure, so much easier; you learn that PECTOPAH is not a pectin-filled food additive; it gives you a head start in making out a few words of Ukrainian, Polish, Serbo-Croat, Czech and Bulgarian; it gives you a friendly opening to any of the increasing number of Russian visitors to Scotland.

It is fun, it is beautiful, it is useful: it is enormously well worth learning at school, and must not be allowed to go the way of Greek and Latin or even serious maths and physics. I only wish that I myself had started earlier.

Keep up your campaign! **Chris Thompson (former teacher of Russian in Dundee)**

As a teacher of German to secondary school pupils, I have become accustomed to having to promote the importance of German as a very important language of trade and business within Central Europe. However now, with the Scottish Government's decision to phase out examinations for Russian, the future educational opportunities of our young people are being severely limited at a time when their employment opportunities appear to be becoming unlimited. The decision to scrap Russian also directly undermines both the traditional ethos of the Scottish Education System, and the spirit of the brand new Curriculum for Excellence, each of which promotes breadth of educational opportunity for our young people! **Kenneth Campbell, modern languages teacher, Earlston High School**

I support the campaign to keep Russian examinations available. We need a variety of modern languages to be offered at schools and colleges, especially in the public sector.

If no exams are offered, interest in learning the language at school will diminish further.

It is not just about economic consequences of a narrowing focus in mfl but also wider cultural and political impact. **Marion Sporing, Senior Lecturer in Applied Language Studies, University of Dundee**

I am shocked and saddened by the news that the SQA intends to scrap Russian exams.

Theoretically, the Curriculum for Excellence should give schools the opportunity to tailor courses to the needs of their pupils. In removing the possibility of working towards a Russian exam, the S.Q.A. is actually restricting choice for Scottish youngsters.

This proposed narrowing of the available languages in the Scottish curriculum is surely at odds with the philosophy behind the creation of the Scottish Language Baccalaureate.

The Scottish education system has a reputation of being second to none: in deciding to abandon one of the world's major languages, the S.Q.A. is making a serious mistake.

I teach Russian in an extra-curricular club at a Scottish secondary school. I was actually approached by some S2 pupils who had become interested in the Russian language and who wished to learn it: the club was set up at their request. They tell me that they wish to receive certification so that prospective employers will have proof of their accomplishments.

I find it appalling that future generations of Scottish schoolchildren may have to take English exam board qualifications instead of Scottish qualifications. **Mari Beagrie, teacher, Glenrothes**

It would be difficult to make any new comments to add to the ones already made. But perhaps I can add a comment which might cast a different light on the issue.

After a lifetime of teaching English I am now working with immigrant youngsters. Though most of

them speak Polish, there are some who speak Russian at home. I believe there may be plans in the system (do correct me if I'm wrong!) to introduce qualifications in Polish as a way of enabling these children to leave school with an additional qualification. Why should native Russian speakers be deprived of a similar opportunity?

A couple of years ago, on an HMI inspection, I was advised to encourage a native Italian speaker to study for SG Italian, again as a route to acquiring another qualification.

In one school where I've been working, they have adopted this enlightened approach by allowing a pupil to be presented for SG Mandarin! (There are Chinese materials for use on the SQA website!) **F.**

Robson, teacher, Edinburgh

I believe that abolishing the teaching of Russian in Scottish schools is a very short-sighted attitude to the future needs of this country.

For as long as Russia remains "a mystery wrapped in enigma" – which it could always become again – Scotland (and Britain) may one day regret taking this type of approach to foreign languages. **Elena**

Crosbie, formerly Lecturer in Russian, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

I deplore the SQA decision to abandon exams in Russian from 2015 onwards. This is occurring at precisely the time that Russia is re-emerging as a major European and global player and growing at a pace that Scotland and the rest of the UK can only envy. Our engagement with Russia in business, cultural and political terms is only going to increase in coming decades. Currently, mutual mistrust, misapprehension and even fear characterise our relations. If this is to improve, and for our countries' sakes it must, how is this possible without understanding each others' language and culture? Ceasing the study of Russian shows an immense lack of foresight and will prove economically and politically damaging to Scotland. **Luke March, Senior Lecturer, Politics and International Relations, University of Edinburgh**

I am very concerned that this is yet another example of a narrowing of the curriculum in the name of economy and the need to invest more money, which is in short supply, in raising standards in the core areas. Having a variety of languages on offer in schools is hugely important. One remembers the wonderful work done in promoting Russian in a number of maintained schools in Scotland not so many years ago. Whatever happened to all that.

It seems to me that no one wants to pursue Russian, because it is not being encouraged and SQA is not going to offer any examinations because no one is offering Russian any more. This is not a situation brought about by natural causes but by deliberate policy.

Sad, sad, sad!!!!!!!!!! **David Allott, teacher, East Lothian**

As Academic Director of the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre at the University of Edinburgh, the aim of which is to advance knowledge of the Russian language, I would like to express my deep regret at the decision to discontinue the SQA qualification in Russian. If implemented this short-sighted measure will deprive Scottish students of an important school qualification in a language with an extremely rich cultural tradition and of a country which grows in importance politically and economically. Moreover, Russian has emerged as an international language which has now more speakers living outside than inside the Russian Federation, and a growing number of Russian speakers are settling in Scotland. In the context of the expanding demand for Russian in the UK at all levels it seems that the Scottish secondary education sector is failing to address the linguistic requirements of the 21st century and to ensure that the Scottish school leavers have adequate linguistic and cultural knowledge to meet the challenges of the globalising world. **Dr Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, Head of Russian and Academic Director, Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, The University of Edinburgh**

I teach Russian at Peterhead Academy. Four years ago I was invited to teach Russian as a supply teacher, because of the big demand for Russian. A couple of years ago I became permanent part time teacher. I do really enjoy teaching Russian. We have got excellent exam results and the pupils learn this language with pleasure.

Our pupils are mostly native Russian speakers, who left their home country many years ago and they are delighted to improve and practice their mother tongue. It is very important to keep their literacy

at an appropriate level, polishing their grammar, spelling and handwriting and also reading literature in Russian.

The other pupils in my groups are Scottish. Yes, there are also Scottish pupils interested in Russian. They are very motivated to learn Russian. Some of them want to be a linguist or interpreter and the others want to work in the oil industry, where the Russian is an important language. It is undeniable that the number of the Scottish pupils is increasing every year. We are planning to run 'Oil' and 'Business' Russian for senior pupils as well.

Each year I teach some pupils from different secondary schools. They visit my classes regularly or I meet them after school.

It can be clearly seen there is a demand for Russian. I am deeply upset and disappointed about the SQA decision that the Russian exams will not be available after 2015. They say the reason is no demand for Russian. It is not true. We have got approximately 80 pupils, who are native speakers, bi- or tri-lingual speakers. We have also got 10-15 Scottish pupils, who want to learn Russian. I think this shows significant demand. There are a huge number of primary pupils, who also want to learn Russian and they will come to the secondaries in 2-3 years.

The Russian is a 'easy to learn' language. It is very logical and the pupils have immediate success after few lessons. Through the language they can have an insight into a wonderful and interesting culture and they can also have excellent opportunities in different businesses.

To deprive pupils of learning Russian is a short sighted and inappropriate decision from SQA especially in this country, where the new national curriculum is called 'Curriculum for Excellence'. And finally this decision is completely against the European Union's Language Policy, which promotes multilingualism and aims for a situation in which every EU citizen can speak at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. **László Novák, Teacher of Russian, Peterhead Academy, Peterhead**

I am horrified to see that it is intended to withdraw curricula and examinations in Russian for Scottish school pupils.

Russia is one of the largest and most important countries in the world, and it makes no sense at all to deprive Scotland of people able to communicate with speakers of Russian, and to take part in trade and cultural exchanges with a large player on the global stage. From others' comments I see that Scotland is to be the only country where young people will not have the opportunity to learn the language.

Yes, it is a relatively difficult language to learn for a monoglot English speaker, but I was fortunate enough to be able to study Russian at both school and university, and in both my working life and my leisure I found it an extremely useful skill.

I urge the SQA to reconsider this bizarre and economically damaging decision. **Anne Burgess MA BSc and formerly FTS**

I honestly believe that Russian is on the up everywhere in the world which is not surprising as Russia now is an OPEN country. It is amazing how many academic, business, political, social and cultural links have been established since 1991.

Our school is no exception: in 1998 when I started teaching at Eton College we had fewer than 30 boys studying Russian at GCSE and A-level. Today (September 2010) we have 121. You can say a lot of things about an average Etonian but one thing they always managed to guess right (over nearly 600 years) is the direction of the future growth. I hope that Scotland will not be missing this opportunity at the time when a lot of people in many countries are joining in. **Peter Reznikov, Russian teacher, Eton College, Berkshire**

Students

I'm hoping to study Russian at university next year and I wish that I had been able to study it at school. **Mhairi Duncan, S6 pupil, Edinburgh**

This is very disappointing news. Abandoning Russian to the history departments will only allow the already rampant myths and misconceptions surrounding an important world power to haunt the national psyche indefinitely. How can such a move be justified in Scotland, when only 2 years ago it launched a campaign to attract Russia's big-spending tourists?

The SQA has disfavoured languages in general for too long. This is at once the result and continuing cause of an unpardonable arrogance with regards to foreign languages and cultures, if not a humiliating national ignorance of most cultures outwith ten or so Mediterranean resorts. This is surely impermissible in the present age. And surely it need not be stated that in this economically unstable period of history, favouring Gaelic at the expense of languages like Russian, would be an act of hubristic folly.

A Scotland that disfavors the study of modern languages; that takes for granted the notion that 'the whole world speaks English anyway'; that even takes pride in such a worldview! Isn't such a Scotland undermining its very claim to an independently Scottish national identity on the world stage? To say nothing for the very legitimacy of its independent education system! **Alexander Edward Ross McCabe, PhD student, University of Glasgow**

As a student of Russian at St Andrews I was disappointed to hear that Russian will no longer be taught in Scottish schools. A year ago as part of my degree I spent a year in Russia during which I wrote a dissertation on the links between Scotland and Russia. It was with great interest that I discovered a large number of historical connections between the two countries. Additionally I met many Russians with an interest in Scotland and it is a shame that we cannot reciprocate this interest by at least offering Russian lessons to our school pupils. I myself regret not being able to learn Russian at school. I believe that if I had started learning Russian at a younger age my great knowledge of the language would have enabled me to get more out of my year abroad in Russia. The decision disappoints me most of all because it is short-sighted and can only be detrimental to Scotland's efforts to promote itself on the world stage as we risk losing out to countries who do appreciate the growing importance of Russia. **Andrew Brown, 4th year student of International Relations and Russian, University of St Andrew**

Linguists

Scottish CILT is Scotland's National Centre for Languages. Our vision is for a multilingual Scotland where all languages are valued and where lifelong language learning is recognised as a key skill, one that makes a significant contribution towards the creation of a fairer, smarter, more successful Scotland. We are therefore deeply concerned about SQA's intention to abandon national qualifications in Russian from 2015. Whilst we appreciate the law of supply and demand, we would urge SQA to consider the wider implications of their plans - any reduction in the provision of language qualifications sends the wrong message to Scottish society and in particular to our young people about the value we place on languages as a key life skill. As a nation we need to stimulate demand for language learning and for this learning to be given recognition via world-renowned qualifications such as those provided by SQA. **Sarah Breslin, director, Scottish CILT**

I am writing to add my support to your campaign to maintain exams and teaching of Russian in Scottish schools. I am currently undertaking research on supply and demand for language skills and my investigation show that there is serious 'market failure' across the UK in the ways that the needs for language skills are identified and then translated into provision. This is damaging our economy, our reputation abroad and the opportunities open to individuals. The situation requires strategic leadership from decision-makers to arrest what can easily be a cycle of decline - the case of Russian in Scotland is exactly this. Russian must surely be among the critical languages in which capacity is required for economic, strategic, cultural and intellectual purposes, now and in the future. **Teresa Tinsley, Alcantara Communications LLP**

Having taught Russian in schools to both native speakers and learners at all levels, I am convinced the discontinuation of SQA qualifications in the language would be to the huge detriment of

languages education in Scotland. At a time of more open contact with Russia than ever before, there is demand out there from motivated young linguists who enjoy the challenge of learning a language which offers them the chance to learn and use a new alphabet. As Literacy becomes a clear focus in Scottish education through Curriculum for Excellence, we should not overlook the positive knock-on effect this can have on their native language literacy and embrace any opportunity to help our students develop their skills. **Chris Brandie, Russian Rep, Scottish Association for Language Teaching**

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

I am speaking on behalf of the Executive Committee of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), of which I am the President, and which represents well over 600 academics specialising in aspects of Russian, Slavonic and Central and East European Studies across the social sciences and humanities

The decision to discontinue SQA National Exams in Russian comes as an enormous shock and disappointment to us. It will entirely scupper the efforts to restore Russian provision in Scottish schools at the very point when it seemed that they were about to be successful. This must be most disheartening to those involved. We very much hope that the decision is reversed.

The fact that government report after government report (most recently a HEFCE report of 2009) comes out clearly and strongly in favour of sustaining and strengthening provision in Russian, both at school and at university level, should come as no surprise. Russia is among one of the four fastest growing economies in the world. Russian is currently ranked no. 5 in the number of speakers world-wide.

Scottish pupils will, therefore, be at a distinct disadvantage if they continue to be deprived of the opportunity to learn Russian. Scotland's status in the world at large, its deserved reputation as an outward-looking, internationalist nation, as well as the ability of Scottish companies to compete in international markets, could all be severely diminished if the decision is enacted.

BASEES boasts a large number of Scottish academics and postgraduate students amongst its members. Scottish universities have long been major contributors to our activities. Scottish schools have in the past supplied these universities with significant numbers of their Russian students. It would be most unfortunate if this relationship were to cease, and if the Scottish secondary sector were to withdraw altogether from contributing to the task of fostering understanding between the United Kingdom and Russia. **Stephen Hutchings, Professor of Russian Studies, University of Manchester, President, BASEES**

As academics and educators specialising in Russian and representing the national Association for Language Learning, we are deeply concerned with the plight of Russian in Scotland. We view the recent decision to abolish Russian exams from 2015, simply, as short-sighted and narrowly utilitarian. We believe that it is in this country's interest that Scottish young people, now and in the future, should be competent in Russian language, the language of a rapidly growing economy. In a globalised world characterised by international links and intercultural connections, linguistic skills and international experience are crucial for employment and career. Knowledge of Russian, in particular, improves one's chances on the job market, and is in great demand in the UK; for example, UK Government Communications Headquarters announces Russian as one of priority languages to master. Many Russian companies in the UK and Western Europe, and many British companies in Russia and companies with close links to Russian-speaking countries look for employees fluent in Russian. International organisations, such as, UN and UNESCO also name Russian among languages in greatest demand.

Russian is the most geographically widespread language of Eurasia, the fifth widely spoken language in the world, the most widely spoken language of the Slavic languages, and the largest native language in Europe. It is the language of Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky which provides access to one of the greatest world cultures.

Isolating Scotland from Russia by ignoring the strategic importance of learning Russian language will significantly disadvantage the members of the Scottish society in educational, business and cultural

sectors. If situation with Russian is to improve in Scotland, SQA must give it a firm place in school life and enable as many pupils as possible to benefit from the opportunities this language creates. Therefore, we urgently call upon the SQA to reconsider their policy regarding phasing out examinations in Russian. **Dr Natalia Tronenko, Chair, Russian Committee, ALL (Association for Language Learning)**

Please do not deprive Scottish children of the possibility of learning one of the world's greatest languages. **Ann Shukman, Lockerbie**

I am writing in support of your campaign to keep Russian school exams in Scotland.

Yakety Yak Language Café now offers a daytime session in Russian conversation and it would appear that there is great demand for Russian in Edinburgh.

Since we have introduced Russian, more people look at our page on Russian than look at the pages for either German or Italian and we are going to introduce an evening session in January 2011 as well as our daytime Russian conversation session.

I think it would be a great shame if future generations of Scots do not have the option of learning Russian in school as this is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world today. **Fiona Gomes, Yakety Yak Language Café, Edinburgh**

Business

I was appalled to learn of the decision to scrap the teaching of Russian in Scottish schools. There are deep-rooted links between Scotland and Russia which bear testimony to the strong bonds between the two countries. Furthermore, a decision to drop any language from the school curriculum can only be a retrograde step. Those who take the approach of, "why bother learning languages when the whole world speaks English?" not only show their ignorance of the world, but also show a singular lack of appreciation that learning another language opens up a whole new vista on the world. **Stephen Dalziel, director, RBCC (Russo-British Chamber of Commerce)**

In the light of the SQA's ill-judged decision to abandon national courses in Russian, I fully support the SRF's campaign to reverse the decision.

The ability to speak Russian is vital in trade relations now and in the future. With the emergence of Russia as a powerhouse economy to rival Germany, Scotland should be placing itself at the forefront, not marginalising itself on the periphery of Europe.

This move seems to reinforce the position of Scotland as a nation where the ability to speak a foreign language is not valued and undermines our future as part of a world where international trade and commerce form the lifeblood of our economic system. **Phil Stirling, Scottish Development International**

Scotland has long been known as a source of entrepreneurs, and Scottish business is famous for its ability to reach out to overseas markets. Now more than ever, the world is changing. Amongst the strategically most important countries to emerge are the so-called BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China). If Scottish schools do not offer Russian, then students will be forced either to seek tuition outside of Scotland, or to seek expensive private tuition, thus making engagement with Russia increasingly unlikely for Scotland. This seems to be a remarkably poor decision, and very badly timed. The losers will not be the students, who will have other choices. The loser will be Scotland. **David Cant, Managing Director, Albion (Overseas) Ltd**

We at RMJM are very concerned to hear of the SQA announcement to abandon exams in Russian from 2015.

As you know, we have won many projects in Russia dating back to 1994 and currently employ 43 staff in three offices throughout the Russian Federation with a substantial part of our work undertaken in collaboration with our offices in the UK.

We consider Russia will continue to be a source of significant work and whilst it is a testament to the cultural sophistication of that country in that the majority of our Russian staff speak fluent English, most of our clients and partners in Russia highly value the ability of our British staff to speak Russian.

Unfortunately that ability had to be developed late in the careers of our UK staff due to the limited access to such learning in our schools. As we all know, learning languages is most effective at school age. Through literature and other cultural matters, language opens doors to greater understanding and the establishment of steady working and business relationships.

With the improving relationships with and the economic status of Russia, the case for increased access to Russian at our schools is strengthened and we are highly surprised to hear of this approach by the SQA. Accordingly we support your campaign to reverse this position and will continue to do so. **Jim Patterson, director of RMJM and head of RMJM Moscow**

I was concerned to read your message.

Having lived and worked in Moscow for nearly 2 years and with almost 8 years of experience in Eastern Europe it is clear that Eastern Europe in general and Russia in particular has tremendous growth potential. I am certain that Russia's importance on the global stage will continue to grow for many years and unlike some other non English speaking countries it is a significant disadvantage to do business in Russia without knowing the language. Having lived and worked in 7 different countries in the past 20 years, this is the first time I have made more than a cursory effort to learn the language, as knowing more than conversational pleasantries does make a big difference in Russia. Supporting this theory are the Scots who speak Russian fluently and have demonstrated a far greater ability at integrating fully into the community and establishing strong and long lasting relationships that undoubtedly are an asset to operating in Russia.

Given the impact of last year's financial crisis and the current uncertainty in all aspects of commerce globally, it would be extremely shortsighted to completely dispense with the teaching of such a useful skill. It would put potential Scottish entrepreneurs and businessmen at a disadvantage in this major market and sends a misguided signal on who we feel may be key business partners in future years.

I wish you every success in your campaign to have the teaching of Russian reinstated in Scottish schools. **Bert Fol, General Manager, Marriott Moscow Royal Aurora Hotel**

In a world of global market opportunities and competition it is essential that Scotland orientates itself externally, not internally, not least in education where we have been historically so strong. Cultural understanding of emerging markets, such as Brazil, Russia, India and China, and associated language skills are crucial. We are advantaged by the English language, but now is not the time to become isolated mono-linguists!

As a business professor rather than a linguist, I still find I need to lecture and research in all these four countries to keep abreast and to support our students who come from these countries too. But where will our own internationally-orientated students come from in the future, if we cut off the stream of future talent coming from schools with language capabilities pertinent to a globalising world?

I wholeheartedly support this campaign to get Russian back into Scottish schools. Abandoning the school exams would be the final coup de grace and is certainly not the way forward. **Professor Chris Carr, University of Edinburgh Business School**

Russia is a huge potential market for Scotland - there are 142 million Russians, who eventually will want to buy/sell things. Our children should be actively encouraged to learn Russian, just as they should be encouraged to learn Mandarin and Spanish.

Unless you have been privileged, as I have, to be an exporter for over 40 years, you simply cannot grasp how vital language is. It is fashionable to say that foreign languages are not necessary, 'as everyone speaks English'. They do not. If my own command of Russian had been better I would not have been trying to buy a train ticket for the wrong date at a station in northern Russia earlier this year... **John Stein, businessman, Stirling**

Others

What does it say about Scotland that we no longer feel the need for any of our youngsters to learn the language of Europe's biggest nation? **David Leask, journalist**

The MOD invests heavily in Russian language training but these days the main purpose is for Defence Diplomacy. Defence Attaches from each of the Armed Services and their support staff are posted not only to Russia, but to a variety of former Soviet nations. I anticipate that there will be a Service requirement to communicate in Russian with these countries for many years to come. This will undoubtedly be mirrored in the wider diplomatic and economic interaction the United Kingdom has with them as these nations increasingly emerge as strong economic powers. Historically the MOD has had much success in training its people in Russian but currently a good deal attention is being placed on the more difficult languages of Farsi, Pashto and Dari due to ongoing operations in Afghanistan. **Graham Oliver, Lt Cdr RN, OC European Wing, Defence School of Languages, Beaconsfield**

I earned my Bachelor of Arts in Russian language and literature from the University of Manitoba, Canada (2003), with the intention of teaching my future children Russian and otherwise making sure that they were raised in a bilingual English-Russian environment. If Russian is eliminated from Scottish schools, it will be a great blow to language education. Russian is spoken by over 300 million people worldwide, and is an official language in many countries as well as organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, IAEA, BRIC, OSCE and many others. Removing Russian language from the Scottish curriculum will mean that future generations who would benefit from learning this language and the Cyrillic alphabet will not be able to have this advantage unless they are privately tutored, which is not always financially possible for parents. Public teaching of Russian will also mean that the language education offered by schools will not be limited to those languages which only use the Latin alphabet: French, German, Spanish and Italian. We do not see these languages getting sacked from the curriculum because there is sufficient support from the public for their continued use. Russian, spoken by citizens of the largest country on the globe, should not be eliminated. **Stephanie Briggs, Saltcoats**

As a graduate in Russian from Edinburgh University, I was astonished and saddened to learn of the demise of the teaching of Russian in schools and the abandonment of national exams by the SQA. I believe that Scotland is taking a narrow view of Russian influence in the world, and forgetting its cultural and historical links with Russia in the past. Scotland will have much to lose if it does not reconsider this shortsighted decision. **Harriet Martin, Edinburgh**

It was with great dismay that I read about the decision to abolish state exams in Russian in Scotland. It will be a huge loss to the people of Scotland both on an intellectual and practical level. Although not Scottish I chose to study Russian in Scotland due to its long affiliation with the language and culture. I studied in the sadly now defunct Russian department at the University of Strathclyde in the late '80s early '90s, where I can honestly say that the tuition was second to none. Later, I obtained a PGCE from Jordanhill and am qualified to teach Russian and French.

After many years working in Moscow, I returned to my native Ireland in 2000 to find that Russian language skills were much in demand. This demand has grown dramatically since the accession of former Soviet countries into the EU. Russian is used as a lingua franca among migrants from those states and is constantly heard on our streets and in our workplaces and schools. There is barely a day when I don't use it either socially or professionally. I teach ESL and the majority of my students are from the former Soviet Union. I am also involved in community interpreting - at doctors', solicitors', social welfare and in schools and have translated community notices for local clubs into Russian in order to encourage integration - especially of the children.

It seems very short-sighted of the Scottish government to abolish the exam. There is an ever-increasing need for high-quality community interpreters, Russia's importance as a market and trade partner is very unlikely to decline. There will be a substantial number of first language or heritage Russian speakers going through schools. If the demand for a higher in Russian is not there at the moment, it will be soon. In Ireland, it is offered mainly as an extra-curriculum subject. The demand has grown since 2007 and is expected to grow further as the children of migrants pass through the

system. It will provide native and heritage speakers with an opportunity to have an advantage during their leaving certificate exams instead of the disadvantage due to having English as a second language.

You are doing the country a huge disadvantage. **Anne Marie Devlin, Ireland**

Knowledge of Russian as a language will be vital in years ahead, as it is a strongly emerging economy where trade, science and culture will form an important part of relationships between our two nations. In making the decision to stop courses in Russian, there seems a lack of awareness about trends in this century, such as working together and removing boundaries, not to mention the profound effects that are occurring with climate change that in effect will turn humanity's living space into One Country. If only the officials who make these decisions could open their minds and see just what lies before them, I am sure they would reconsider making the Russian language a vital link between our country, Scotland and Russia, a link that has often been strong in former times.

Harold Lane, Dornoch

I believe the business case for continuing Russian is simply that most Russians do not speak English, and therefore to do business with this country of 200 million people, we need to have a decent number of people who can speak Russian. To me that's obvious. And it worked for me. I helped Aldus in Edinburgh produce the first legal software in Russian and then sell it to Russia because I speak Russian. So I was able to liaise between software engineers, businesspeople, translators and layout artists in Moscow and Edinburgh, from 1989 to 1992. And that meant that a company in Scotland could boast of the technological breakthrough that that represented at the time, attracting the interest of Microsoft as they were wrestling with the same technological and linguistic questions at that time.

However, to me the main reason for teaching Russian in schools concerns a rounded education, an appreciation of a very rich culture and the unfortunately continuing need to build bridges between Western Europe and Russia. Russia remains politically and culturally isolated from Western Europe, and that is not good for any of us. The more we can understand each other, the more chance we have of normalising relations between Eastern and Western Europe. We in Scotland have less to fear from Russia, fewer bad memories and more good memories. When you couple that with our tendency to think that we are very similar to Russians, we are in a unique position to build those useful cultural relations with Russia and to help it feel at ease with the rest of the world. And how can we not jump at the chance to introduce our children to the language of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky and the country of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov?! **Cathy Ratcliff, Edinburgh**

I am most concerned about the proposal to abandon the Russian language examinations in schools. This is especially timely in the context of the present debate about the teaching of languages in schools. There is no reason at all why the British claim to be poor language-learners - they need motivation, good and creative teaching and opportunities to practise. It is not enough to be complacent and claim that English in various forms is the universal "lingua franca" which will take you anywhere. In several countries outside the main centres English alone is not sufficient. The advantage, however, of the widespread use of English is that English speakers can enjoy the challenge and luxury of learning a fascinating range of other languages. Russian which is a major world language is an obvious case in point. The language is beautiful and opens the door to a superb literature and culture. In practical terms as Russia is so important as a political and economic power commanding vast resources of commodities it is essential to establish links and partnerships where a good knowledge of Russian is a guide to understanding the protocols of diplomacy and business. Apart from attempts to keep the language in the school curriculum there is plenty of informal activity - the classes at the Scotland-Russia Institute, conversation groups and now the addition of Russian along with Mandarin to the meetings of the Yaketyyak language cafes. The public have also seen very impressive Russian contributions of music and dance to both the Edinburgh International and Fringe Festivals which contribute to a wish to learn more about Russia and its language. **Jennifer Scarce, University of Dundee**

As someone actively involved with learning Russian for the benefit of the charitable work that I do, it would be very disappointing if my 2 children were not given the opportunity to learn the language when they attend Secondary School. In Perth the council promotes its connections with the Russian city of Pskov and I find it hard to believe that whilst doing this they would let the opportunity for children to learn the language be lost forever. I would give my full backing to try and reverse any decision to completely remove Russian from the school curriculum. **Steven Carr, Chairman, Dnipro Appeal Charity**

Scotland and Russia have strong historical and cultural links and it is very important to ensure that Scotland offers school pupils the opportunity to study this rich language and culture. Russia also demonstrates a country in transition with significant business opportunities that Scotland and its people should be encouraged to engage with. It is the smart thing to do. As a former graduate of Russian, I can also personally attest to Russian, Russia and its people offering pupils and university students a unique experience which is carried into adulthood and which provides a rich and vibrant education across various disciplines including language, literature, politics, economy, philosophy, the arts and theology. Scottish school pupils should be actively encouraged to take up this wonderful language with all the benefits it brings. The argument that there is 'no demand' is weak. If schools and the government promoted the language, pupils would study it. **Lisa Maclean, Glasgow**

I saw on your website that the SQA are considering dropping Russian exams. This would be a great pity as my four children have got so much out of learning Russian these last 3 and a half years. Indeed my eldest two were actually interviewed in Russian on Russian NTV news channel a few days ago - <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/205686>.

I was overwhelmed at the massive interest from Russia about the documents we have from Sir Walter Scott. Apparently all Russian children read Sir Walter Scott's works at school. It is a pity more children are not learning Russian as this would help enlighten the Scottish people to these and other interests and help them to be inspired into creating new services designed for the Russian market. **Dr P Baillie-Hamilton, Baroness of Strathyre, MBBS DPhil (Oxon)**

I was disappointed, if not particularly shocked, to learn of the decision of the SQA to cease offering qualifications in Russian from 2015. I would like to support you in your campaign to change this decision.

I took a module in Russian in my final year at Fortrose Academy, and this taster course led to me studying Russian (along with French) at Heriot-Watt University. I was sadly a member of one of the last graduating classes in Russian from that university, which took the short-sighted decision to close its Russian Department a few years ago. The baffling aspect of this decision for me was that Heriot-Watt did not see the internal contradiction of its decision: a year after graduating I moved to Tomsk, Russia, as a British Council Language Assistant and on the first day of my job at Tomsk Polytechnic University I was greeted by a Heriot-Watt University flag fluttering in the -20C air. Heriot-Watt, it appears to me, sees the value of links with oil and gas departments at Russian universities, but is unable to connect up the dots to maintaining its own Russian department.

I am now studying for a MA at the UCL School of Slavonic & East European Studies, where students from all over the world come to study the politics, culture and language of Russia. Disappointingly, I am one of only a handful of MA students from the UK. More disappointingly, the chances of that changing appear to be every slimmer. **Gemma Tracey, former student at Fortrose Academy and Heriot-Watt University, London**

I wholeheartedly support your motion to campaign against Russian exams being removed in Scotland.

It is very important for school pupils to study languages. Not just French and German, which operate in English for business and with which Scotland does not have many direct trade links, but languages of major and future economies.

Russia has trade and industrial links with Scotland. Scottish engineering and diplomacy has to be able to compete on the world level.

Trade and commerce aside, children need a wider world view and knowledge of other cultures, and

language is the key. Learning a language helps people understand their own language better and express themselves better.

Hopefully we can reverse this troubling trend for removing languages that is seen all over developed English-speaking countries. **Stephanie Droop (Scottish graduate of Edinburgh University Russian Section, now working in Moscow)**

Having learned Russian at school and at university, it is now that I am starting to benefit from it. When looking for employment, a whole new bracket of jobs opens up, when in an interview, having Russian is an extra-ordinary complement that all business seem to appreciate. When working in Russia for a company called Diageo, the benefits and the opportunities that were exposed to me (having learned Russian) were innumerable. In the future, I believe that Russia in general is going to be pivotal o 21st century living, being able to speak the language is therefore going to be incredibly useful. Personally, the gains that I have had from learning this subject have been well worth learning a different alphabet! **George Bullard. Polar explorer, speaker & Russian enthusiast**