

GCE

Spanish

Advanced GCE A2 **H477**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H077**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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F721/01, 02, 03 Speaking (AS)

General Comments:

The majority of candidates had been prepared well and understood the requirements of each section. Most candidates were given suitable opportunities by Teacher /Examiners to show what they knew and could say.

A few Centres still need to remember that the correct option codes are: 01 for mp3 files (uploaded to the OCR Repository) and 02 for CDs (sent to the marking assessor). Recordings, together with headed working mark sheets and topic forms for each candidate, should be uploaded or sent as soon as the tests have been completed.

The two parts of the test are equally weighted. Care should be taken to observe the prescribed timings. In part one the sequence for role-plays as printed in the examiner's booklet should be followed.

In part one candidates need to convey essential information found in the stimulus material, and be prepared to address readily questions, queries and concerns raised by the client (Teacher/Examiner). Many candidates were well trained to engage with the Teacher/Examiner at the start of the role-play, e.g. *Aquí tengo un folleto / producto (etc.) perfecto para ti...* and also provided the information in a relevant and persuasive manner. There were several well thought-out answers to the extension questions. Some candidates, however, treated the stimulus material merely as an exercise in summary or translation: it is important to remember that interaction between Teacher/Examiner and candidate is essential to allow proper development of the role-play. In a few cases, Teacher/Examiners gave candidates insufficient opportunity to cover or clarify the information on the stimulus sheet and instead asked a number of extra questions only tenuously linked to this.

In part two, the topics were for the most part well researched, and many candidates were able to elaborate or justify points listed on their topic forms, showing a personal interest and involvement in the issues covered. In some Centres, however, there was a distinct lack of variety, with many candidates repeating near-identical statements with minimal development of ideas. At times candidates were even invited to offer a series of mini presentations, in some of which the speed of delivery and flatness of intonation rendered parts of the content almost unintelligible. As in part one, Teacher/Examiners should encourage a discussion to develop, and should interact significantly with the candidates if higher grades are to be achieved.

Quality of language is assessed in both parts. Many candidates made a real effort to widen their range of structures, including the correct use of the subjunctive, appropriate range of tenses, concrete and hypothetical registers. Weaknesses included the perennial slips with *gustar*, uses of *ser/estar*, adjectival agreements, problems with pronouns (*para tú* being particularly common), verb endings and basic numbers. Elementary errors of accuracy were often present even in otherwise good candidates. Some expressions now seem endemically corrupted: (*Yo creo que*) *no es vale la pena; no problemo* being just two. There was also a tendency to insert expressions such as *que yo sepa; es de suma importancia; ojalá pudiera concluir diciendo...* in statements whose context or register rarely merited them.

Pronunciation was generally good or very good, seldom less than acceptable, though intonation continues to be a key differentiator. Both intonation and correct stressing were adversely affected when candidates went into auto-pilot mode while mentally reading a script as their answer in the topic section.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1: Role-plays

The Teacher/Examiner's role as client is paramount, because to some extent The Teacher/Examiner's performance is the key to a candidate's success. Where, for instance, the Teacher/Examiner forgets to ask a certain prompt question, this may have a detrimental effect on the candidate's Use of Stimulus score. Then again, asking questions about points already covered by the candidate (a fairly frequent occurrence) causes confusion because candidates may lose their train of thought. Where candidates encountered difficulties, this was frequently because they tried to translate the stimulus material literally rather than conveying the underlying idea or activity.

At the start of each role-play, candidates have to ask the Teacher/Examiner questions. Candidates' ability to formulate questions continues to vary considerably. Many would profit from more practice in this.

Role-play A

This concerned a visit to a famous house and garden. Candidates were required to give information about the location, the contents of the house and grounds, and the activities and facilities available. In the extension questions, candidates discussed arrangements for a day's visit and their views on the benefits or otherwise of cycling.

Vocabulary items that caused difficulty included "works of art" (*trabajos de arte* was widely used); "paths", "flour". "Mill" (*molino*) was quite widely known, though there were several successful attempts to paraphrase this. Somewhat surprisingly, "clocks" seemed beyond the reach of many candidates, with variations on *cosas para decir la hora* being a frequent way round this. Very many candidates seemed unsure of possessive constructions and their attempts demonstrated the folly of literal translation: *Lord Fairhaven's casa elegante* and *uno de Inglaterra's grandes jardines* were distressingly frequent, even from candidates who overall showed a better standard of work..

Points of content that were sometimes omitted included going to the visitor centre to find out what was on offer on the day and the fact that the site was **near** Cambridge, not **in** the city. The ability to "pick up an art pack and draw what you see", although generally referred to, was sometimes ambiguously covered, not least because *dibujar* appeared to present difficulties.

The extension questions were handled well – some candidates included the need to go to the visitor centre as part of their suggestions for arranging the day; virtually all candidates had views on cycling.

Role-play B

Candidates were required to explain the advantages of distance learning as offered by the *Mundial* study organisation. The essential content points were covered fairly readily, particularly the notion of flexibility and affordability. Not all candidates made the point that the mode of study offered was different from traditional education, but did explain that you could study wherever and whenever you preferred. Although some candidates had vocabulary problems with some items – forum, adviser, qualification –, nearly all found ways round these to make their point.

Numbers, however, were frequently poorly handled, with wide-ranging errors – candidates being unaware of when to use *ciento/cien* or *y*: "150" was frequently *cien (y) cincuenta*, "1954" : *mil nueve cien (y) cincuenta y cuatro*. "15%" was even *diecicinco por ciento*. Very few candidates indeed expressed "more than ten million people" accurately.

Other points randomly omitted included the short taster-courses, and the fact that to obtain the discount you had to pay in full online.

Again, most candidates had used their preparation time effectively to approach the extension questions about their experience of studying something completely new, and on the advantages and disadvantages of going to university. This said, some candidates did have difficulty in using past tenses in handling the first question.

Role-play C

Candidates had to explain how to go about accessing health services in England. They coped well overall with some of the simpler points of content but sometimes ran into difficulties if they tried to translate literally the expressions used in the stimulus material, e.g. "walk-in centre", "your card might not cover everything that is free in your country". Nevertheless, the majority found sensible ways of conveying the information.

Vocabulary hurdles for some included: "emergency", "treatment", "temporary". Some expressions were quite satisfactorily rendered in other ways if the exact word was not known: "prescriptions", "appointment" "opticians", (e.g. *si tienes problemas con los ojos / las gafas*, etc.). Some expressions of time or numbers also provided a challenge, e.g. "365 days a year", and "999", which was occasionally *nuevo, nuevo, nuevo*. There was also uncertainty over "are open": few candidates were able to combine correct use of *estar* and the appropriate form of *abrir* – *son abrir* was surprisingly common.

The second extension question about how to live a healthy life was generally answered well. The first, which asked whether candidates would like to be a doctor, was more challenging, at least in linguistic terms, since it invited more abstract language, as well the use of *gustar*.

Role-play D

Candidates have frequently coped well with technological contexts and this, how to use the BBC iPlayer, was at least competently covered by most. Where there were possible vocabulary problems for the would-be literal translator ("download", "software", "browse"), the majority of candidates managed to convey the message quite adequately by explaining in other words – i.e. they succeeded in carrying out the task.

Good attempted renderings included *preguntas comunes* (FAQs), *palabras importantes* (key words – though many knew *clave*), *grupo* (forum). A frequent error, however, was *la* with *programa*.

Some points of content were not always fully clarified: some candidates had problems differentiating between how long the programmes were available after downloading, and how far back one could access the programmes.

The extension questions gave plenty of scope for variety. The second question, on the candidate's most important device in social life, was particularly enthusiastically covered.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

Centres were careful to keep within the topic areas prescribed in the Specification, though a fairly limited range of topics tended to be chosen. The most popular included *la comida española / la dieta mediterránea*, *el tabaquismo*, *turismo*, *deportes*. Outside these areas there were some instances of more individual interest, such as the changing nature of the family, educational trends in Spain, shortcomings in opportunities for training and education for young

people. A number of candidates used a film, book or play to illustrate relevant aspects of one of the AS topic areas.

In terms of content, the quality and extent of candidates' research varied from superficial or anecdotal accounts, drawn from personal experience or based on general knowledge, to (in the majority of cases) a good analysis of the topic, supported appropriately by examples and justified opinions.

There were fewer examples of purely biographical accounts, but the information provided in certain areas, notably tourism and food, was of a rather basic level, occasionally little beyond that of GCSE, and there were also some over-lengthy descriptions of general aspects, such as the dangers of smoking, drugs, obesity, etc. but with insufficient focus on the Hispanic context. A further shortcoming was for some Centres to permit, or encourage, candidates to deliver a series of well prepared statements, heavy with statistics or factual information, or to participate in scripted question and answer, rather than encouraging a discussion in which to develop the ideas and opinions that are sought in the mark scheme.

Some candidates failed to adjust, for spoken delivery, the wording of what had been gleaned from written sources. The result was that material which would have been appropriate for incorporation in an essay sounded pedantic, stilted and unnatural in speech.

It was encouraging, however, to note that in many Centres candidates used their factual knowledge judiciously to engage in a lively and spontaneous debate with the Teacher/ Examiner; they were able to deal sensibly with unexpected questions. Such candidates were awarded good scores, and deservedly so.

F722 Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments:

The examination was of an appropriate level for candidates one year on from GCSE. The stimulus texts, drawn from both Spanish and Latin American sources, proved to be accessible, and the tasks discriminated well between differing levels of ability. The AS topic areas of sport, addictions, education, tourism, work and food were all explored, allowing candidates to draw from their familiarity with such subject matter. The paper posed challenges, which candidates invariably met in a positive manner.

Candidates seemed to have been well advised on how best to manage their time allocation for this lengthy examination. There were very few who appeared to be rushed, and who consequently left themselves with little time to answer Task 7, which carries such a large proportion of the total marks. On the few occasions when short questions were left unanswered it usually appeared to be an issue of inability to answer, or occasionally oversight, rather than lack of time.

There were a pleasing number of good candidates who showed signs of practised exam technique, language enhancement strategies and better understanding of the subjunctive, and who also did their best to convey the meaning without resorting to hispanicized English words. There was also a smaller, but not insignificant, group of candidates with some kind of linguistic advantage, who did not always do themselves justice, mainly because of lack of training in exam technique and who wrote as they speak.

Presentation of the papers was generally good, and nearly every candidate heeded the instruction to write their answer in the space provided or, in the case of longer answers, on extra pages. However, there were occasions when poor handwriting, careless spelling (Spanish and English) and faulty punctuation would spoil the overall impression of an answer, or even make it ambiguous. A few candidates offered alternative words in answers by the use of a forward slash. Centres should remind candidates that in such cases only the first alternative will be marked. The practice of taking a few moments to jot down a plan before launching into Task 7b is spreading, and answers are benefiting from extra structure.

Candidates had generally been well prepared in the techniques required for tackling the different sections of this examination. The majority displayed competence and confidence, and were able to record an accurate and often creditable measure of the level of progress they had made in Spanish.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

This was the first time that this variation of the objective test type had been used, and candidates seemed to take it in their stride. The listening text appeared to be well understood, with maximum scores of 10 not uncommon and the majority scoring 5 or higher. There was no clear pattern in correct or incorrect answers. A few candidates lost 1 or 2 marks when they overlooked the warning in the rubric to tick only ten boxes.

Question No. 2

Similar outcomes were recorded for the second objective listening test. The text of a woman talking about her efforts to give up smoking was generally well understood and good marks were commonly recorded. The fact that (b) was a correct answer was often overlooked.

Question No. 3

The advertisement for courses on how to play Flamenco guitar discriminated well. In this exercise, in addition to showing comprehension, candidates need to express their understanding in clear English. On occasions this proved to be difficult, not only for candidates from a Hispanic background, but for first language English candidates as well.

- (a) Most candidates correctly stated the two questions which were asked at the start of the advertisement.
- (b) To score the mark here, it was necessary to show understanding of *a fondo*. Only a few candidates were successful in this.
- (c) Loose English was often a handicap here. There is a difference between ‘specialist musicians’ and ‘music specialists’, and the latter answer was not accepted. The second mark was sometimes lost if ‘lots of experience’ was not qualified by ‘teaching’.
- (d) Understanding of this use of *ganas* was not as widespread as might have been expected.
- (e) There was good differentiation in both this and the following 3-mark question. Maximum scores on both were not uncommon, as also were marks of 1 or 0. Most candidates correctly answered that the courses were ‘personalised’. A number misheard *a tu ritmo* as *a turismo*.
- (f) There were similar outcomes as for the previous question. The fact that tuition would take place in the same building as you stay was understood by many, though appreciation of the meaning of *desplazarte* was mixed.
- (g) Recognition of the two very basic words *profesor* and *nivel* needed to answer this question correctly was a little more imperfect than had been anticipated.
- (h) There were many correct answers to the first part of this question. In the second part, *barrio gitano* caused a surprising amount of difficulty, with a number of candidates offering transcriptions such as ‘*jitano* district’, indicating that they had heard the words clearly enough.

Question No. 4

Candidates appeared to have been well prepared and were very familiar with the techniques required for this transfer of meaning exercise. It was tackled with confidence, and communication was invariably achieved, albeit with greater or lesser linguistic accuracy. There were often some pleasing and successful attempts at paraphrase to sidestep potential linguistic barriers. Only a small minority scored fewer than 5 marks for communication.

With the possible exception of the bottom band on the grid, a full range of marks was awarded for quality of language. Every phrase in the text posed linguistic challenges:

‘I heard’ – first person past verb required

‘your advert’ – vocabulary, and consistency with second person forms used later

‘I’m interested’ – *estar*, or *me interesan* without *en*

‘I’ve been playing the guitar’ – not *jugar!*

‘for three years’ - little awareness of how to construct the correct temporal clause

‘style’ – commonly misspelt (but allowed for communication)

‘is it possible’ – followed by subjunctive, (attempted by many) - *no soy español pero es posible que...* worked well as a paraphrase

‘to be good at Flamenco’ – most communicated, but few realised that literal translations do not work in Spanish

‘can you send me’ – often careless errors in what should be a familiar phrase

‘cost...include...stay’ – familiar vocabulary, which generated considerable inaccuracy

‘will there be’ – future of *hay* caused many problems

‘take part in’ – many imitated their first language practice of ending a sentence with a preposition

Many candidates successfully negotiated this list of potential stumbling blocks, and marks in the top two bands for quality of language were commonly awarded.

Question No. 5

The multiple-choice reading comprehension exercise based on a text about eco-tourism in Ecuador also differentiated well. There was no discernible pattern in correct or incorrect answers and a full range of marks was awarded.

Question No. 6

As was noticeable throughout candidates’ responses elsewhere in this paper, there is an ever-increasing familiarity with the techniques required to answer questions successfully. This question was no exception, with a considerable majority appreciating that, in addition to showing comprehension, there was a need to show manipulation of language or to use a verb in the correct tense in their answers. The text about a young Spanish internet entrepreneur was accessible to most, and good marks were often scored for comprehension. Marks for quality of language were usually similar to those scored elsewhere in the paper.

- (a) Candidates needed to state that *Vicente* had achieved success on the Internet, and to use a suitable third person verb correctly.
- (b) This caused a few more problems than the previous question, with candidates being required to state the reason behind visits to the website. This usually, although not always, needed a verbal construction.
- (c) The best way to answer this was with a suitable third person past tense of the verb *vender*. Attempts to use *vendar* were not allowed.
- (d) Two facts were needed to score the two marks on offer: that *Vicente* started to study Tourism, and that he did not finish the course. This again required verbs in a third person past tense – although subsequent errors in endings were often accepted provided comprehension was demonstrated, if a similar error had been disallowed earlier. The use of *acabar*, meaning ‘to finish’, appeared to puzzle some candidates.
- (e) Although comprehension was very easy to demonstrate here, a considerable number of candidates were unable in their answers to make the correct agreement of *pocos* or *no muchos* with *clientes* in the question.
- (f) The true indicator that *Vicente*’s business has been successful is that his products are selling in forty countries. (The fact that larger companies have wanted to take him over is not necessarily a measure of success). A correct third person verb was again required.
- (g) There were a number of different ways to state that *Vicente* could not work for anybody else, ranging from the simple textual change *no está dentro de su mentalidad tener jefe* to more complex structures, such as *es imposible que tenga jefe*. The answer *Vicente quiere ser el jefe* was not considered to be a true reflection of what was said in the text.

- (h) This was answered well for comprehension, and candidates often came up with linguistically accurate ways of noting that *Vicente's* work/life balance frequently left something to be desired.
- (i) Candidates commonly found this 2-mark question to be among the most challenging in the exercise, and few succeeded in scoring both marks. For the first part it was necessary to state that *Vicente* only goes to the cinema when he believes it will excite him. The somewhat tortuous way in which he expresses this in the text was often too much for candidates to unravel.

In the second part, not many candidates appeared to be familiar with the expression *Ni hablar*, and *Vicente's* emphatic dismissal of lazing on a beach was often overlooked.

- (j) Other than *vencer*, there are hardly any suitable synonyms for *superar*, and candidates would have been better advised to concentrate their energy on converting *me siento* to *se siente*, or simply using *piensa/ cree que es*, rather than attempting to paraphrase. It was considered that *hacer* did not convey the same meaning.
- (k) A lot of success was achieved here, with candidates either manipulating the words of the text or coming up with a variety of other ways to express *si todo le fuera mal*.
- (l) Comprehension posed few problems, with candidates able to state with greater or lesser linguistic accuracy that money was of little interest to *Vicente*.
- (m) Two elements were required for this answer: that *Vicente* did not have any clear plans for the future, only that it would be interesting. The linguistic challenge in expressing these two facts appeared to be fairly straightforward.

Question No. 7a

Candidates seemed to welcome the fact that the topic of fast food had been selected for the high value summary and personal response questions. It was clearly a topic which many candidates had covered in the classroom and one which they felt very much at home with. This sometimes worked to the detriment of candidates who attempted to include extra material which had not appeared in the text, or also included personal opinions.

Most appeared familiar with the technique required by this type of summary whereby specific details must be selected from the text to answer the question which has been asked: in this case, what is said about the popularity and dangers of fast food. The text contained a number of easily identifiable relevant details, and candidates who were able to reproduce these in sufficiently accurate Spanish did well. The majority of answers scored marks in the second and third bands of the comprehension grid, with a smaller, but not insignificant, number achieving marks from the top band.

Not every candidate was able to identify both speed of service and the large number of outlets as the main attraction of fast food.

Greater success was had in stating that there were more than five thousand establishments in Spain, and that this number was increasing.

It was rare for all of the next three points - that fast food's success is not solely due to its convenience, that we have all given in to the occasional hamburger, and that the consequences of these changes in our eating habits are becoming noticeable – to be stated in their entirety. Considerable success was achieved, however, in noting that one in two Spaniards are overweight, and that cardiovascular disease was the main cause of death in Spain.

Adolescents' predilection for fast food was commonly stated, as was the fact that low prices and lengthy opening hours encouraged youngsters to spend a lot of time there at the weekends.

The fact that they preferred the environment of a fast food restaurant to traditional meals at home proved more of a challenge to unravel.

Only a minority of candidates were able to convey the meaning of *les da igual* with regard to future health issues.

Question No. 7b

This task provided a sound stimulus for candidates' opinions, as it offered the possibility of a considerable number of points under each heading, as well as giving them the structure to organise their arguments logically. Perhaps understandably, after a stimulus text about fast food, not so many were inclined to discuss the drinks aspect, and the majority just focused on food.

On the government side, candidates identified the particularly important role of advice, information and guidance for families, schools and children. Some got carried away by the possibility of excessive dictatorial powers, which in general were decried, although there were quite a few who thought that the government should be closing these restaurants down or at least restricting their number. There were also some very unusual and unique suggestions on how the government might restrict the consumption of junk food, for example, everyone could be sent a weekly voucher for fast food, or people would be limited to a weekly visit to a McDonalds.

On the personal side, important points which were made included human rights, recognition of individual dietary needs and the sanctity of the individual's choice. Parental responsibility and personal self control also featured prominently.

The general conclusion was that regulation of what we eat and drink was the responsibility of both the government and the individual.

Differentiation by language skills occurred within the twenty marks available for quality of written language, which was assessed for accuracy and range over both 7(a) and 7(b). A full range of marks was awarded. At one extreme were a small group of candidates with gaps in knowledge of both grammar and vocabulary who showed little signs of having progressed since GCSE. This was countered elsewhere by some outstanding examples of effective, accurate language which showed a clear ability to use a wide range of structures and vocabulary.

There was a definite increase in numbers using the subjunctive correctly and in a natural way, not just 'shoehorning' it in. There were also lots of examples of good language enhancers: *a mi parecer, en cambio* etc, and of conditional clauses being used correctly. On the downside were the frequent omission of the personal *a*; the lack of distinction between *que* and *lo que* (this topic highlighted it: *que comemos y bebemos es nuestra decisión*) and the complete interbreeding between *interesar interesarse en/estar/ser interesado/interesante*. There was also a worrying trend of the *tú* form appearing for any person of the verb.

Candidates who planned and wrote carefully, albeit often less, gained good marks for the accuracy of their language. Others who rambled on for four or even five pages suffered, as the quality of their language rapidly deteriorated.

F723 Speaking

General Comments

Centres have a well-established and clear understanding of the demands of the A2 Speaking Test. Most candidates are encouraged to perform to the best of their ability by Teacher/Examiners who are adept at getting the best out of their candidates in what is an extremely demanding element of the A2 Spanish qualification. The majority of Centres are fully aware of the regulations of the specification and the detailed rubric of the actual test, and consequently candidates tend to feel more relaxed and at ease with the pressures of the oral test.

Once again all Centres complied with the requirement to submit the test recordings digitally on CD/USB or via the OCR Repository. A small number of Centres experienced technical difficulties with transfers onto CD but such issues were dealt efficiently by the Centres involved. A small number of recordings were not clear in terms of quality, largely as a consequence of microphone positioning. It is worth repeating that poor quality recordings make it difficult to assess, fully and fairly, candidates' oral abilities and so cannot work to the benefit of the candidates. The continued use of small mp3 recorders is strongly recommended on the grounds of ease of use and recording quality.

Most candidates were very well prepared for the challenges to be dealt with in both sections of the test and, with the admirably professional approach of their Teacher/Examiners, the end results were often very good indeed. The standards achieved by this year's cohort were largely similar to those of last year. The texts in Section A continue to provide candidates with plenty of opportunity to respond to the stimulus material in a way that shows full understanding. Some candidates still rely far too much on mere repetition of the text on the page, which makes it difficult for an examiner to gauge whether or not the candidates have actually understood the points they are trying to convey. Those who adapt or paraphrase the original text or who seek to explain the issues in their own words are always likely to attract more marks in Grids K and L, as well as Grids C.1 and F.1. A small number of Centres preferred to ask their own questions on the text, instead of using the suggested questions from the Teacher/Examiner booklet. This is perfectly acceptable, provided that the Centre's questions stretch candidates sufficiently for them to demonstrate their ability in terms of textual analysis and response to a written stimulus. Simply asking a candidate to summarize the first paragraph, for example, is unlikely to provide such opportunities. It is also worth pointing out that referring to the text as *un role-play* may also confuse the candidate during the test.

In Section B most candidates performed fully in line with their ability. It would be true to say that this second section offers candidates the chance to shine. This is because, in presenting their topic or topics, they can display their research skills and their ability to marshal evidence, information or statistical references, as well as their linguistic competence. Nevertheless, some candidates obviously relied far too much on pre-learnt responses to questions they were hoping to be asked. This approach lacks the element of spontaneity needed to attract good marks in Grid E.2.

As was mentioned in last year's report to Centres, it is absolutely not enough in this second section of the test to deliver an overly prepared sequence of mini presentations in response to pre-learnt questions from the Teacher/Examiner. It is only fair to explain to Candidates that this technique will certainly not help them to access the higher marks in the marking grids. It is highly recommended that Teacher/Examiners find some way to start this section that does not involve saying, for example, *Bueno, empieza tu tema cuando quieras...* or *Empieza tu presentación*, simply because such invitations merely encourage a series of pre-learnt paragraphs from candidates.

It is pleasing to note that most Centres have accepted the concerns expressed in previous reports regarding the choice of inappropriate topics for discussion in Section B. Far fewer candidates this year elected to discuss more limited topics that are more in line with the AS Specification. Works of art or literary texts or writers can of course be discussed (as one of the *Culture sub-topics*), but it is important that candidates delve into the impact and the influences of such works or artists on the issue under discussion in contemporary Spanish/Latin American society. Huge chunks of biographical detail are unnecessary and unproductive in an A2 oral test.

In terms of the administrative requirements for this test, there continue to be unfortunately a number of problems. A small number of Centres filled in the working mark sheet with the marks they themselves would have awarded, had they been assessing the candidate. Needless to say, such marks must be disregarded by the actual examiner. Centres are strongly encouraged to bear in mind the checklist below (as published previously) before sending the script parcel to the examiner or to the uploads recordings in the Repository:

<p><i>Each recording of each test for each candidate must have TWO accompanying documents.</i></p>
<p><i>These are the Working Mark Sheet (WMS), duly filled in with the candidate's details and the Topic Sheet (Form OTF) with a list of TWO possible topics for discussion.</i></p>
<p><i>It is also important for the centre to make sure that the attendance register is sent to the appointed examiner. Some centres uploaded the attendance register onto the Repository but examiners still need to receive the carbonated register in the envelope with the address label provided by OCR.</i></p>

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Texts A, B and C

Texto A (Un periódico para los ciegos), *Texto B (El impacto de sentirse solo)* and *Texto C (¿El país más pacífico de Latinoamérica?)* all offered candidates many opportunities for a reasonably detailed conversation with the Teacher/Examiner. Once again, Teacher/Examiners fully understood the need to avoid giving a candidate a text that clashed with their chosen topic in Section B.

Many candidates dealt effectively with questions both on the text and on the themes of the text. Once again some candidates tended to be hesitant on a regular basis and therefore appeared not fully to understand the question asked. As was stated last year, however, it is worth pointing out here that there is no penalty for candidates who ask for a question to be repeated, provided this does not become a regular occurrence.

It was clear that all three texts were equally accessible, and most candidates dealt well with the inevitable complexities and challenges involved in such demanding and immediate textual analysis. The 20 minutes of preparation time is helpful in this respect and it is obviously the case that candidates are using this time well in order to analyse the text in some considerable detail. Accordingly, misinterpretations of any of the texts were uncommon, and it would be fair to say that they served their purpose well and the response from candidates to them was generally positive.

Section B: General Conversation

Once again many candidates scored well in this section, especially in Grid M, given that they had obviously researched their selected topic/s very thoroughly indeed. The majority of topics were appropriate and complied with the requirements of the Specification, and refined research skills were again very much evident..

A number of areas of Spanish grammar caused a degree of difficulty. Amongst the most common problems were adjectival agreement, the incorrect use of the passive with *estar* and/or the failure to make the past participle agree. Candidates understood the need to be able to express ideas and opinions in their responses to the questions asked on their topic/s, and the range of expressions used to introduce their views was very much a strength this year. Some candidates, however, tended to end, rather than begin, their sentences with utterances such as *creo que...* There was also some confusion with regard to the use of the Preterite and the Imperfect tenses. In addition, some candidates used impersonal expressions such as *es esencial que...* with the Indicative instead of the Subjunctive mood.

Nevertheless, in general terms, the overall standard of spoken Spanish was good.

F724 Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments:

The paper worked well. There was a wide range of responses from candidates at many different levels of achievement. Specific questions and sub-questions were targeted effectively at different levels of achievement, which allowed candidates to demonstrate their varying skills and knowledge. At the top end, strong candidates were able to achieve high marks confidently; candidates used their own language or adapted the language from the various texts. Further down the range, performance varied according to the level of the challenge that a candidate could handle; at this level the candidates' use of their own or adapted language was often less noticeable and weaker candidates tried to respond to many questions by copying from the texts, which did not always produce an adequate answer to the question set.

The best responses came from candidates who had effectively studied their topics and their Spanish language (vocabulary and syntax, as well as essay writing skills). These most successful candidates were also the ones who took the time to read the questions carefully and who considered the materials at their disposal before putting pen to paper. Such candidates, whether in the listening or reading sections or in the essay question, did not confine themselves to repeating what they had just read or heard or what they had learned in class about their topics; instead, they reacted to the questions by adapting that material to ensure that they gave an appropriate answer to the question set.

Handwriting was a significant issue on a number of candidates' work. Examiners always try their best to read and reward the work appropriately but some candidates did not help examiners in this endeavour. Candidates should therefore consider this aspect of their work carefully.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A – Listening and Writing

Task 1

Candidates were required to answer in English and the vast majority of candidates did so, although some appeared to need more practice at expressing themselves in accurate and unambiguous English.

- (a) Well answered on the whole, although some struggled to express all the concepts in appropriate English, e.g. not far from the (administrative and financial) centre of the city.
- (b) Only a minority included the future reference in (i) to reflect the fact that the turbine had not yet been built. Most answered (ii) correctly about generating renewable energy, although there were sometimes issues concerning the word "renewable". In (iii) all but the weakest candidates specified the correct number of families that would benefit from the wind farm's energy.
- (c) Well answered in general, although there were issues about expressing the concept in English appropriate to the Spanish text.
- (d) Well answered, although some candidates found it challenging to express the idea of making the city a producer of energy rather than a consumer.
- (e) Well answered on the whole, but candidates who translated the Spanish literally often produced confusing English. Not all realised that the decision concerned **where** to place a wind farm as opposed to **whether** to build one.
- (f) Well answered generally, although not all were able to specify the significance of the percentage which was clearly explained in the text.

- (g) Well answered, although some answers concerned general 'green' energy aims rather than the specific point made in the text.
- (h) A reference to high pollution levels was required by the mark scheme and most answers included this; many also included a more or less successful attempt at explaining the causes of that pollution - which was not required.

Section B – Reading and Writing

Task 2

Some candidates' answers were no more than transcriptions of significant extracts of the text. Often these failed to answer the question.

- (a) Poorly answered. Most candidates wanting to transcribe *corta edad* were unable to do so credibly; most frequently it appeared as a single word. Only the best also realised that the concept needed a reference to Javier or *el director*, since the answer *es joven* did not answer the question.
- (b) Varied answers. Many were correct, but some indicated that *ambos reconocen a Javier* which is misleading or used the transcription *sus trabajos consiguen el conocimiento* de which did not answer the question.
- (c) This question presented no problem to most candidates, although some omitted a reference to the prize or, if they included the category of prize, wrote of *directo* instead of *director*.
- (d) Some attempted unconvincing transcriptions of *adquirió el hábito de ir al cine*. Others simply mentioned that he used to go to the cinema, or that his work as a producer started there. Some transcribed *no ha parado de trabajar* as an answer, which was mentioned in the text but did not answer the question. Not many referred correctly to his passion for cinema starting in Málaga, which was on occasions expressed in elegant and original language.
- (e) Well answered in general, although a correct adjectival agreement for *llenos de dudas* was rare. Some answers concentrated on the idea of *como algo caído del cielo* even though this did not relate to the question.
- (f) Well answered. However, some answers were transcriptions in the first person (*hice*) and there were many different spellings of *hizo*, e.g. *hico* or *izo* or *iso*.
- (g) A mixed performance. There were many answers with *rodear* or *robar*, presumably indicating lack of familiarity with the word *rodar* in the film context. Both interpretations of *cine* were accepted, i.e. either a building or *el séptimo arte*, provided answers made it clear that the director wished to make a film of a new or different type for Andalucía.
- (h) Good answers, but some did not specify that the *best* professionals were in those cities. Transcription from the text of *suelen trabajar los mejores profesionales*, without reference to the cities, did not answer the question.
- (i) The best answers avoided transcription and succeeded in expressing the idea that he realised that his earlier work was not up to standard.
- (j) This simple question proved challenging for some. Candidates should have said what he had done, rather than what he could have done. There was frequent irrelevant transcription in answer to this question.
- (k) This was mostly well answered. The challenges were to realise that transcribing *ausencia* invalidated the answer and that the market was needed specifically for the works of the videographer.
- (l) There were some succinct and well written answers to this question. However, transcription did not answer this question because it did not clarify what could be done regularly in Madrid for 2 euros, i.e. see the best videos in a main cinema.
- (m) This question, specifically about the audiences for videos, was less well done. Only some candidates realised that in the past the audience normally had access to videos through festivals and that the effect of the internet now was to increase the audience size. Most

- answers referred to there being easier access to videos or attempted to transcribe all or part of *está siendo una herramienta bruta*, without answering the question.
- (n) Candidates who transcribed sometimes had problems with the spelling of *corta duración*. Many candidates transcribed large sections of the text here without answering the question, which by contrast was elegantly achieved by some with the simple information that videos were successful in the internet age because they were short.
 - (o) This proved challenging to those whose main technique was to transcribe. As a result relatively few answered that the videographer could not *ganar dinero*. There was nothing in the text that implied he could not sell his videos, the answer given by many candidates.
 - (p) Quite a few answers transcribed the text and in doing so failed to provide a clear answer.
 - (q) Well answered in general, although some candidates struggled to produce correct grammar here.

Task 3

- (a) Examiners were looking for answers which referred to how Londoners started that day and so did not accept, for example, *pasaban, experimentaron, estaban fríos*. Correct answers used the relevant tense to refer to the *ese día* in the question.
- (b) Well answered, though a plural verb after *la gente* was common.
- (c) A straightforward question which was well answered on the whole.
- (d) Well answered. Some candidates had problems with agreements, e.g. *una mujer fue asesinado/ matado*. At least one candidate entered into the spirit of the text by answering *murió* which was of course accepted.
- (e) The Imperfect was the most appropriate tense for this past description.
- (f) This was a straightforward question for candidates familiar with the correct uses of *ser* and *estar*.
- (g) There was varied performance here; correct answers needed to reflect the questions in the text – *quién* for the first blank (so *la identidad*) and *por qué* (so *la razón*) for the second.

Task 4

This task proved to be an effective test of comprehension. There were many instances of correct answers, but words were added or omitted on occasions in (b), (c) and (d). The two most challenging phrases proved to be (a) which was often answered incorrectly with *un día típico*, and (d), for which some candidates gave no answer and others provided apparently unconnected words or phrases, such as *una cinta amarilla, vecinos* or just *boca abierta*.

Task 5

There was a good performance here. Some candidates chose A or B as possible answers. It was rare for candidates not to score full marks.

Task 6

- (a) This was well answered in general. Some candidates had problems because they transcribed *cuidar* as *ciudar*. Others struggled to express "to look after" in their own words. The wrong tenses appeared here sometimes. Some gave the answer to (i) in (ii) and *vice versa*, and some answered (ii) with *consiguió prácticas*.
- (b) This question asked candidates to appreciate that *una camarera* usually would work in a restaurant of some kind; some therefore lost marks here by transcribing from the text. Weaker candidates placed her as working in an advertising agency in Bristol.
- (c) To gain the mark, answers had to make it clear that it was a temporary job or a work placement that took her to London, rather than the more general *para trabajar en una agencia*.
- (d) This question was generally well answered, although some struggled to explain the concept of the *crimen profesional* clearly.

- (e) This was well answered, although some candidates gave over-generous interpretations of the word *cerca*.
- (f) Again, generally well answered, although some answers simply transcribed the fact that social media "helped a lot", without being specific.
- (g) Answers to both parts of the question were often sound and good answers avoided transcription.

Task 7

Candidates scored across the whole range of marks. In general, the 5 phrases of 10 words became progressively more challenging as the text advanced. Particular issues which deserve more attention are spelling, verb tense and the differing uses of the Definite Article in the two languages.

Some candidates were challenged by idioms such as *al considerar*, *sigue siendo*, *se trataba de* or *lo suficiente*. The verb *hubo* was a difficulty for some. Another challenging phrase was *política nacional de desarrollo a largo plazo*. Only the very best candidates managed to translate all the elements correctly into convincing English.

Task 8

This was generally well done, although not all candidates took due note of the given stem in order to construct the rest of sentence in a grammatically correct way.

- (a) Only the best candidates answered by following the stem sentence; many instead began their answers with, for example, *considera* or *califica*.
- (b) Most answers gave the comparison that was required.
- (c) A straightforward question which was generally well answered.
- (d) Most candidates rephrased the text well to suit this stem, although many omitted the key concept of *scientific* talent.
- (e) This often elicited poor performance. Quite a few answers compared the *universidades extranjeras* with the Mexican ones, for example: *ofrecen mejores becas que las universidades mexicanas*.

Task 9

This is always a challenging type of task, no matter how apparently straightforward the phrases are. Some candidates were apparently unaware of the need to use their own words, despite the clear rubric.

- (a) Many of the answers did not give a clear explanation of *mayoría*. Some appeared to take the verb *regresar* as related to the English *regress*.
- (b) Most candidates scored 1 mark for *los jóvenes*, although some were confused by the formal register of *entre el público juvenil*. On the other hand there were some impressively simple and clear explanations of the whole phrase,
- (c) There was more varied performance here, despite a pleasing variety of ways to express the two concepts of participation and progress.

Task 10

- (a) Most candidates indicated that he was very successful.
- (b) Mixed performance. Some candidates did not include the necessary reference to where he was *fêted* and where his family originated.
- (c) This question required a careful reading of the text, though correct answers appeared on many scripts.
- (d) Good answers made it clear that the people in question emigrated to the US, as opposed to just travelling or leaving the country for a while.
- (e) This was a straightforward question which was well answered by most candidates.
- (f) This question presented more of a challenge which was met in full only by the stronger candidates.
- (g) Many answers transcribed from the text, which did not answer the question directly. The best candidates expressed their answer here elegantly, making use of the breadth of their knowledge of Spanish.
- (h) This question presented virtually no problem, although some candidates wrote of Mario J. Molina as female (*ganadora....La primera en ganar...*) and some did not clarify that he had won a prize.

Section C – Writing

Most candidates possessed in varying degrees the language necessary to write an essay of at least the required length. Examiners frequently had the pleasure of reading a great deal of well written and accurate Spanish. In many cases, it was clear that much planning had gone into the appropriate use of complex syntax or even the effective use of much simpler devices such as linking words. In most – but not all – cases, it could be said that the candidate had made those phrases his or her own.

Most candidates who answered a non-discursive question made only fairly limited reference to the imaginative scenario and did not exploit it to the full.

Many candidates would have benefited from giving more consideration to the structure of their essay, starting with some discussion of the key points in the essay title and working through an argument towards a conclusion. The better candidates addressed the question, selected the relevant factual information acquired by study of the topics in class, and then tried to produce a reasoned argument in order to answer the question or complete the task indicated.

Environmental and social issues continued to be the most popular (questions 13 and 11 and, to some extent, 14 and 12), although science and technology and history and heritage were by no means ignored by candidates who were often well informed and who had interesting ideas on these topics.

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