

GCE

Spanish

Advanced GCE A2 **H477**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H077**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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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 and Reminders

Most tests were carried out in accordance with instructions. Candidates understood the format of the examination and most took full advantage of opportunities to show what they knew and what they could say.

A few reminders are needed, however. The correct option codes for tests conducted by centres are 01 for mp3 files uploaded to the OCR Repository and 02 for CDs sent to the marking assessor. In either option, recordings together with headed working mark sheets and topic forms for each candidate should be uploaded / sent immediately the tests have been completed. Where the tests are to be conducted by a visiting examiner (option 03), the candidates' working mark sheets – again, headed with candidate name and number – and the topic forms, should be ready for the examiner's use at the start of the tests.

The two parts of the test are equally weighted. Care should be taken to observe the prescribed timings. Candidates may not be awarded extra credit for content or language for their performance in excess of the time limits for either section.

Quality of language is assessed in both parts. Those conducting the tests should ensure that candidates are given opportunities and encouragement to use as wide a range of language as possible. Many candidates made a real effort to widen the range of structures, to show competence in an appropriate range of tenses and use concrete and abstract registers. There was a marked improvement in the correct use of the subjunctive in subordinate clauses.

The most common errors included incorrect use of *gustar*, adjectival agreements, passive constructions with *estar* and failure to make the participle agree, adjectival agreements generally, basic genders. There were many problems with pronouns (the distressingly frequent *para tú* giving rise to an analogous *para su* in an attempt at formality with *usted*), verb endings and numbers. Some coinings now seem permanently part of the lexicon: *no es vale la pena*; *creo que* at the end of a sentence, along with gratuitous use of expressions such as *que yo sepa* or *es de suma importancia* in a banal context.

Pronunciation was generally at least acceptable, and often very good. Intonation is still a key differentiator. Pronunciation, intonation and correct stressing were adversely affected when candidates went into autopilot mode while mentally reading a script for their answers in the topic section.

In part two, the topics were for the most part well researched and many candidates were able to elaborate on 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, many candidates repeating near-identical statements with minimal development of ideas. Some candidates were invited to deliver a series of mini presentations, where speed of delivery and flatness of intonation could make parts of the content almost unintelligible.

In both parts of the test, significant interaction is required for access to the higher grades. Those conducting the tests should bear this in mind and encourage a discussion to develop.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1: Role plays

The sequence for role plays as printed in the examiner's booklet should be followed. Candidates are required to convey essential information from the stimulus material and to respond to questions and concerns raised by the "client" (teacher / examiner), who should introduce the exchange with the wording printed in the examiner's booklet. Candidates start by asking two initial questions to set the scene. The substance of these introductory questions is indicated on the candidate's sheet, but some manipulation is required to phrase these in a natural or idiomatic way. As has been reported previously, candidates' ability to do this varied considerably: more practice in formulating questions is indicated. The initial questions over, many candidates made an appropriate introduction to the material: e.g. *Aquí tengo un folleto / producto (etc.) perfecto para ti / usted...* and provided the information in a relevant and persuasive manner. There were several well-thought-out answers to the extension questions.

Both teacher / examiner and candidate need to remember that the exercise is a role play. Again this session, in a few cases the stimulus material was treated merely as an exercise in summary or translation, with little or no intervention by the teacher / examiner, and lacking the interaction that is essential to allow the role play to develop. At the other extreme, some candidates were given insufficient opportunity to cover or clarify the information on the stimulus sheet, but were asked instead a number of extra questions only tenuously linked to the content.

Strengths were shown by the number of candidates who used the information in the stimulus as a basis for a persuasive and relevant exchange in response to the concerns raised by the teacher / examiner. Weaknesses were evident in word-for-word and line-by-line translation of the English information, with little attempt to address the actual question or to show the relevance to the client's stated needs or preferences. Again, as has been reported previously, some candidates made unnecessary difficulties for themselves because they tried to translate the stimulus material literally rather than conveying the underlying idea or activity.

We again emphasise the importance of the teacher / examiner's role. If the teacher / examiner omits a certain prompt question, this may have a detrimental effect on the candidate's Use of Stimulus score. Not interacting with the candidate can similarly hamper access to the higher ranges of the Response to Examiner grid.

Role Play A

This role play concerned visiting the Brecon Beacons National Park by public transport.

There were few problems of vocabulary, though a number of candidates were uncertain about *leaving* or *arriving*: a number said you would arrive home at 5.30, rather than getting the bus home at that time. Very few candidates apparently knew the correct use of *de* with clock times (*de la mañana*, etc.); utterances such as *llegas a las son las once por la mañana* were commoner than might have been expected at this level. *Reducciones* was a frequent substitute for *descuentos*; some candidates struggled with *conductor*, and the genders of *ciudad* and *catedral* were fluid. There were some inventive and largely successful paraphrasings for *well-behaved dogs* and *kept on a lead*, and most candidates conveyed *bank holidays*, *network*, *car-free day out* in an acceptable way, though those who insisted on translating the information literally came unstuck, with infelicities such as *coche libre día fuera* or *familia billete*.

Points of detail sometimes omitted included *summer Sundays*, *early June to late September*. A few candidates said that Brecon and Cardiff were *en Escocia*. Some candidates overlooked the fact that the tourists had a dog, a point which was given in answer to one of the opening questions.

The extension questions on the candidate's preference for open-air activities and attitudes to the benefits of public transport or car provided scope for a suitably personal range of responses.

Role Play B

Candidates were required to explain the benefits of using Vitality Health Studios. The essential content points were covered fairly readily, though a number of points of detail were frequently overlooked or given with ambiguity. These included: *(large) indoor pool* – a number of candidates thought this was *al aire libre*; *foot problems* – *pie(s)* seemed unknown, *pierna(s)* being substituted by many; and *moderate charges*. Some candidates did not make it clear that you could have an initial chat on *any* Wednesday, or that this was free. *Months* swung between *mesas*, *mesos* and only occasionally *meses*. Some candidates struggled either to find the word itself or the correct gender of *diente*. On the credit side, most candidates covered *resident nutritionist*, *advice on diet / eating healthily*, *season ticket* and *save money* successfully. Those who didn't know *principiante* nevertheless explained the idea appropriately, but didn't always make it clear that there were activities for people with different abilities or experience.

Most candidates had plenty to say in response to the extension questions on keeping fit and eating healthily.

Role Play C

Information on hiring a car was the basis of this role play. Problems here were generally omission of points of detail or uncertainty with a few basic constructions.

Most candidates conveyed the advantages of hiring a car – e.g. see more, more convenient – and the essential processes and conditions applicable to the contract. Not all candidates said that cars were *under* one year old or that the firm had been going for *over* 30 years, and some confused this further by mixing up *más* and *menos*, though notably most knew the difference between *de* and *que* in this context. Many candidates knew *avería*, and those who didn't conveyed the idea of *breakdown* and the *free help line*, though prompting was sometimes needed for the times this was available. Some did not make clear that *most* risks (not *all*) were covered by the insurance, or that any potential driver had to be included on the booking form to be covered. *Mapa* was quite reasonably used for *road atlas* and the optional *satnav* at extra cost was conveyed in a number of acceptable ways. The necessary deposit (£200) was not always conveyed clearly, partly owing to the perennial problems with numbers and *libras*. Most candidates made a game and mostly acceptable attempt at dealing with the price promise.

Candidates for the most part dealt well with the first extension question on traffic problems where they lived, and most had something relevant to say about using a car for touring abroad.

Role Play D

This role play was concerned with promoting a sailing school and the opportunities and benefits that it offered.

Although arguably for some candidates the context may have at first sight been less familiar, there should have been few problems with the essential vocabulary and concepts involved - experience, qualifications, benefits, duration and frequency, courses, accommodation, payment, extras, etc. - and so this proved in the event. Vocabulary items included boat, sea, canal, shoes, clothing, plus a selection of financial items such as credit card, payment, insurance, instalments, savings, which have appeared regularly in the stimulus materials. A surprising number thought that the word for *boat* was *bota*. Shortcomings, where present, however, were largely in basic grammar, syntax or idiom.

The essential points were covered reasonably well by all candidates. Points of detail included the idea that tuition was given both in the classroom and on a boat and that you could take part in a course even if you had little or no experience. Some candidates were not clear whether the recognised qualifications would be gained by the participants or were held by the instructors. Most covered some of the social / beneficial aspects of the courses (make new friends, relax, forget work, etc.), but a number did not always combine the need to bring *warm* clothing for the *evenings*, and *suitable shoes*. Some omitted the fact that courses were held all-year round. Although many candidates referred to it, others needed some prompting from the teacher / examiner to include bringing sunscreen. It was not always made clear that the 10% discount was for paying in full. Would-be literal translators made problems for themselves with *travel insurance is advisable* or *get away from it all*.

The extension question on the candidate's favourite sporting activity was handled quite well, though a few candidates referred to their favourite spectator sport instead. Many candidates were able to give a personal example (either true or imaginary) of a course which had been of benefit to them in response to the second question.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

A fairly limited range of topics tended to be chosen, but nearly all centres were careful to keep within the topic areas prescribed in the Specification. There were very few topics which fell outside the AS syllabus and most candidates had prepared thoroughly. There was sometimes an overload of factual information at the expense of ideas and opinions. Popular topics included, *la salud, la comida, trastornos alimentarios, la dieta mediterránea, el tabaquismo, el turismo, la moda, el deporte, la enseñanza y sus problemas*. In some centres, candidates used a film, book or play appropriately to exemplify or illustrate one of the AS topic areas.

The quality and extent of the research carried out varied from superficial or anecdotal accounts, drawn from personal experience or based on general knowledge, to – in the majority of cases – good analysis of the topic, supported appropriately by examples and justified opinions.

There were fewer cases this series 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. Some topics focused at length on 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 expect, candidates to deliver a series of prepared statements, heavy with statistics or factual information, or to participate in a pseudo discussion with scripted questions and answers, complete with unconvincing asides, rather than allowing a discussion to develop and to examine ideas and probe opinions. There is still a tendency for some candidates, whatever the question, to try to turn the discussion into a presentation, delivering a monotone speech which allows for hardly any interaction with the examiner, or to return mid-sentence to where they left off if they had responded to a question. This does of course lead to a lower score in Grid E.1 for fluency and spontaneity.

Some candidates failed to adjust the wording of information from written sources, so that these mini presentations or responses to prepared questions gave the impression of being extracts from a written essay or newspaper article, inappropriate in register and delivery for an authentic spoken discussion and sounding pedantic, stilted and unnatural.

Nevertheless, elsewhere, many candidates used their factual knowledge judiciously and engaged in a lively and spontaneous debate with the Examiner. They responded well to unexpected questions and gained appropriate credit for their performance.

F722 Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments:

This summer's mixed skills examination contained tasks constructed around the topic areas of communication technology, school and school life, tourism, work and training, television, health and addictions. An appropriate level of challenge was provided by a range of tasks drawn from texts in both Iberian and Latin American contexts. The paper discriminated well, as candidates from across the spectrum took full advantage of the opportunities offered to show how able they were to approach the differing tasks. Regardless of ability, candidates should be commended for their positive approach.

Overall, the level of general comprehension was very good, although questions which were designed to discriminate between levels of ability worked well. Time management was handled well, with scarcely any candidates seeming to be rushed in the heavily weighted Task 7. Exam technique was generally good, with the possible exception of candidates from a Spanish speaking environment whose approach to Task 7 was sometimes found wanting. (7(a) is a test in paraphrasing the stimulus text, and it is in 7(b) that the candidate should respond with personal ideas and opinions to the question which has been asked.)

Impressive numbers of candidates were eager to show their knowledge of the subjunctive and other complex structures, and often took full advantage of the opportunities provided in Tasks 4, 6 and 7. It was also pleasing to note how candidates who were less accurate in their written Spanish were able to communicate ideas effectively. This was especially apparent in the transfer of meaning exercise in Task 4.

Although papers were generally well presented, there were sometimes instances where careless spelling and lack of punctuation could spoil the overall impression of an answer. Most candidates wrote their answers in the area indicated on the paper, although examination pressure inevitably led to instances of crossings out and the use of asterisks or arrows to point to answers in the margins, outside the scanned area or on extra pages. Candidates should be dissuaded from offering alternative answers by using brackets or slash, as only the first alternative will be marked. Candidates who need to word process their papers should remember that what may well have been a typographical error has to be considered as a linguistic error.

The majority of candidates appeared to have benefitted from good training in exam technique and had been well prepared for the skills needed for each task. Only a very few candidates had been entered for an examination for which they clearly were not yet ready. As always, at the upper end of the spectrum there were many excellent papers. However, no less satisfying were the answers from candidates who were determined to show off more modest linguistic skills to the best advantage. The vast majority of scripts were a pleasure to mark with candidates and acquitting themselves to the best of their ability.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Question No. 1

Most candidates coped well with this question, with many scoring maximum or near maximum marks. It was not really apparent that any particular opinion was misunderstood more than others.

Question No. 2

This report of an unusual incident at a school was more demanding than Task 1. A full range of marks was recorded, with many candidates attaining at least 5 out of 10. As with the previous question, there was no really discernible pattern in correct or incorrect answers. One or two candidates did not enter 10 ticks.

Question No. 3

The advertisement for *Spain Beyond the Guide Book* was a good contrast to the tracks for 1 and 2 and many candidates responded well and attained good marks by expressing comprehension in clear English. Some items of vocabulary proved to be challenging.

- (a) Here, and throughout this exercise, candidates should be encouraged to include all details that they hear which are relevant to answering the question. Marks were sometimes missed by failure to include 'in the world'. Other errors in this question included confusion of the meaning of *estrellas* to mean film stars and *sitios* to mean cities.
- (b) When writing what they hear, candidates should pause and consider whether what they have written reads as sensible English. The mark scheme was looking for 'natural light' and 'clear night sky', and the tortuous manner in which candidates sometimes attempted to express this could often not be credited with showing comprehension.
- (c) Short answers were sufficient to gain full marks. Those who tried to include *recorrer* invalidated the answer by using phrases such as 're-enact scenes'. *Lugar de nacimiento* was not as often recognised as might have been expected, and few seemed to be aware that *vecinos* also has the meaning of 'local people' (although 'neighbours' allowed).
- (d) The testing of *ganaderos* was a good discriminator. Wrong guesses included 'historians', 'bankers', 'winners', 'gardeners', 'antique collectors', 'guides', 'film extras' and even 'grave diggers'.
- (e) Vocabulary recognition was also a key factor in this question. Candidates should learn to infer the meaning of words eg *búsqueda* from *buscar*. Only better candidates succeeded in noting all the details required by the mark scheme.
- (f) Most candidates were able to note 'traditional food' as one of the three possibilities to be included in the tour. However, the clear expression in English of *alojamientos con encanto* was challenging, and produced several guesses such as 'with an en suite', 'allotments you love' etc. The phrase which caught out many (and exposed a lack of cultural awareness) was *un intérprete para idiomas diferentes del castellano*. The better candidates realised it was 'different from/to' rather than "different of".
- (g) Apart from the occasional candidate mishearing *folletos* as *fotos* nearly everyone scored this mark.

Question No. 4

This task was within the capabilities of the majority of candidates. It was rewarding to see that despite frequent linguistic flaws most candidates were able to communicate a comprehensible written message. Good candidates found the balance between a literal translation and the freedom to express the ideas in a slightly different way. Of the 20 marks available for this question, many were able to score 15 or more, usually with marks for communication exceeding those for quality of language.

Careful checking would have avoided omission of some of the details required by the mark scheme, such as ‘nearby’ or ‘student group discount’. Careful reading would have given the opportunity to correct some basic spelling errors, such as *professor* or *possible*.

At AS level the correct usage of impersonal verbs such as *gustar* should be known and also the distinction between *saber* and *conocer*. The incorrect use of *ser* and *estar* and the omission of the ‘personal a’ were seen here and in other tasks.

Other stumbling blocks, in order of appearance, were:

preguntar for *pedir*

inconsistent use of *tú* / *usted*

pensar de for *pensar (en)*

tomar for *llevar*

¿*Qué es...?* for ¿*Cuál es...?*

spelling of *descuento*

successfully rendering ‘Will it be possible for us to stay...’

surprisingly, some difficulty in expressing *desayuno*

Nevertheless, a good many candidates scored marks of 7 or higher for quality of language.

Question No. 5

This was a familiar format of matching interview questions to answers, and most seemed to find it very accessible. There was a spread of marks. Most common errors seemed to be not leaving (c) blank, confusion of 7, 5 and 8 for i, j and k, and also between 11 and 5. Only one or two candidates used answers twice.

Question No. 6

This task had an accessible text as its source but demanded good linguistic skills, with careful language manipulation needed for all questions, so that any tendency to straightforward lifting just did not work. Although this is generally a short answer exercise it was pleasing to note successful and appropriate attempts at including more complex structures and vocabulary. The text, summarising the plot of a Chilean children's television soap, was well understood overall, although not always in specific details. Marks for quality of language were usually similar to or sometimes slightly lower than those scored elsewhere in the paper.

A key recommendation to candidates is that they answer the question which has been asked. So often they had understood the section concerned but failed to note that the question asked required a change of person, not concerning Jorge but what others did etc.

Not every question required a verb to be manipulated. Candidates could gain full comprehension marks with such simple answers as in (i) ‘*amor*’, or by using the infinitive where linguistically acceptable, as in (c) *estudiar las estrellas*.

- (a) Candidates who were aware of the meaning of *estrenar* were able to answer correctly.
- (b) Most candidates picked upon the fact that it was shown during a holiday period when the children would be able to watch.
- (c) Those who knew the meaning of *astrónomos* had little difficulty, especially after having been primed with vocabulary from Question 3. A number confused the meaning with that of *astronautas*, giving rise to incorrect answers, such as *habrían ido a la luna*.
- (d) *Ir a un colegio en la capital*, or the equivalent, was all that the mark scheme was seeking. A number of candidates were sidetracked by *sacaría mejor provecho*.

- (e) Many candidates did not know the word *parentesco* or, surprisingly, were unable to guess at its meaning. Many were misled by *de la misma edad*. Those who did recognise the meaning, but were unable to come up with *prima*, were able to score the mark by successfully stating *es la hija de los tíos de Jorge*.
- (f) The question discriminated well, rewarding those candidates who realised that the answer was to be found in unpicking *le costaba a Jorge integrarse entre desconocidos*, rather than in the more accessible *Todo ocurrió a mitad del año escolar*.
- (g) This question was asked about *los otros alumnos*, and answers needed to focus on them, not on Jorge. Correct answers noted that the pupils were all city dwellers, or from the capital. A few candidates were led astray by *códigos*, and offered answers such as *los otros alumnos hablaban en códigos*.
- (h) The verb *ceder* seemed to puzzle a number of candidates for one of the answers to this question. No matter how improbable it might have seemed, many answered incorrectly *tuvo que compartir la habitación*. The majority were successful with their second answer: that Silvia no longer enjoyed the status of an only child.
- (i) Most candidates were successful in identifying Jorge's romantic feelings for Silvia, but only a few realised that the best possible answer to the question was the single word *amor*. Answers such as *le gustaba* were not close enough.
- (j) This question was asked about Jorge, not Jorge and his friend, and singular answers were required. There were three possible answers for candidates to select from, and many were successful in stating *probó nuevas experiencias*. Those who realised that they needed to change *se metieron* to *se metió* were also rewarded, as too were those who appreciated the meaning of *pésimo*.
- (k) The use of *de paseo* here to mean 'excursion' prompted a number of incorrect answers, such as *se pasearon en la playa*. It appeared that *bromas* was not widely known, or overlooked at the end of the sentence.
- (l) Good candidates frequently used their own words in answers such as *la socorrista tuvo que salvar a Jorge*, although there was occasional confusion with the use of *ahorrar* and *guardar* for *rescatar*.
- (m) Active answers, and not the passive *ser aceptado*, were required in response to the question *¿Qué quería Jorge que hicieran los demás?*. Good candidates seized an opportunity to use an imperfect subjunctive with answers such as *(Jorge quería) que le aceptaran*.

Question No. 7a

The first leg of this fifty mark question was generally done well. The stimulus text, dealing with a typically Iberian response to bans on smoking, was of an appropriate linguistic level and comprehension levels appeared to be sound. The majority of candidates were clearly aware of the technique required by this type of summary: to select specific details from the text which answer the question which has been asked – in this case, what does the text say about the smokers' club?

Most marks were awarded from the top three bands of the comprehension grid to candidates who were able to communicate relevant specific details in sufficiently accurate Spanish. A small minority of candidates still attempted to include personal opinions here, instead of waiting for the opportunity afforded by 7b.

Most candidates noted the opening point: that tobacco could be smoked, but not sold, in the club.

The meaning of *socios* appeared to trouble a number of candidates, and not so many stated that the club was for members only.

Nearly every candidate mentioned that the 10 euros membership fee covered club activities, but not so many said that this covered running costs as well.

Activities organised by the club were usually recorded accurately, as also were the restrictions imposed on what it might serve or whom it might employ.

Many candidates mentioned the club's proximity to a bar, but only a few were able to show comprehension of how members took turns to act as waiters at weekends.

Self-service from the bar on weekdays was almost universally noted.

The non-smoking José, his attitude towards smokers and his reasons for joining the club appeared to be reasonably well understood. However, perhaps as result of fatigue at this stage of the examination, inaccuracies arose when José was sometimes confused with Julián.

Most candidates were able to reproduce some of the details given by José of how members pass their time at the club.

The word *vecindario* seemed to puzzle a number of candidates, and the final point about how happy the local people were that nobody smokes in the streets was not often recorded successfully.

Question No. 7b

Candidates seemed to be very happy with this essay title and enjoyed expressing their opinions on the question posed. Many were able to express their opinions and justify them with varied examples for both sides of the argument. There were some outstanding examples of effective, accurate language which showed a clear ability to use a wide range of structures and relevant vocabulary. Candidates who planned and wrote carefully, albeit often a limited amount, gained good marks for the accuracy of their language. Others who rambled on for four or even five sides suffered as the quality of their language rapidly deteriorated. Poorer candidates did not know the appropriate range of vocabulary accurately: eg *el fume, el umo, el huelo* etc.

Most candidates interpreted *en todos los lugares* in the essay title to mean 'in every (specific) place'; a few took it to mean 'everywhere' – in other words, a worldwide ban on smoking. Either interpretation was perfectly acceptable, and many good personal responses were offered with the majority scoring in the 12-15 band of grid (*Expresses points of view which are consistently developed and respond to the requirements of the task. Shows some originality and/or imagination.*)

Arguments as to why restrictions should be placed on smokers included: health issues – not only for the smoker but also for those nearby; costs for health services to treat smoking related illnesses; spoiling the enjoyment of non-smokers in specific locations, eg restaurants; reinforcing an image that smoking is acceptable, and thereby influencing children; harmful effects of smoking in confined spaces, such as cars when children are present; and environmental issues such as streets littered with cigarette ends.

Although many candidates would support a total ban on smoking, most realised that this was not likely to happen in the foreseeable future. Arguments for allowing smoking in certain areas included: a total ban would be a curtailment of the individual's freedom of choice; any such prohibition would be impossible to enforce and would just drive smoking and tobacco production underground; smokers are addicts, and it is harmful to remove an addict from the source of their addiction.

The general conclusion was that smoking should continue to be allowed in certain places, ideally in the privacy of an individual's own home, but actions, such as increasing prices and greater help for those who want to quit, should continue to be taken.

Quality of written language was assessed for accuracy and range over both 7a) and 7(b). In 7(a) better candidates wrote competent and coherent paraphrased summaries, whereas less able candidates were prone to linguistic inaccuracies that often meant that they were unable to demonstrate clear comprehension.

Question (b) offered candidates the opportunity to show the full extent of their skills in written Spanish. It was rewarding to see how mid-range candidates and above continued to demonstrate an appreciation of how the quality of expression can be enriched by the addition of more complex structures, the use of the subjunctive being the most obvious example. There were many accurate and appropriate uses of *es importante / necesario que*, conditional clauses after *si* etc. and suitable vocabulary and phrases for developing, supporting and linking arguments.

F723 Speaking

General Comments

The demands of the A2 Speaking Test are now well understood by centres and candidates. Accordingly, most candidates are able to perform to the best of their ability and teacher/examiners are appropriately adept at getting the best out of their students. For many students (and indeed teacher/examiners) this is a very demanding examination. Preparation is essential, both linguistically and in terms of research for the selected topic for discussion in the second section.

Most centres are fully aware of the regulations and the detailed rubric of the actual examination itself and consequently candidates tend to feel more relaxed and at ease with the pressures of the oral test. The sense of relief at the end of many of the recorded tests is palpable, both from candidates and from teacher/examiners.

The vast majority of centres complied with the requirement to record the tests digitally on to 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 very small number of recordings were not clear in terms of quality, largely as a consequence of microphone positioning or of significant background noise. Poor quality recordings make it difficult to assess candidates' oral abilities in a proper manner. The continued use of small, mp3 recorders for these tests is to be recommended to all centres on the grounds of ease of use and recording quality. The microphone should always be pointed at the candidate and not at the teacher/examiner.

Many candidates were remarkably well prepared for the challenges of the speaking test in both sections (text and topic) and the end results were often very good indeed. The standards achieved this year were broadly in line with those of last year. The texts in Section A succeeded in offering candidates plenty of opportunities to respond to the stimulus material in ways that showed full and genuine understanding. Nevertheless, some candidates still relied far too heavily on mere regurgitation of the text itself, thereby showing very little real understanding and offering limited response to the original material. The ability to adapt the original text, or to paraphrase it or seek to explain the issues using their own language, is a skill that is far more likely to attract higher marks in Grids K and L as well as Grids C.1 and F.1. As happens most years, there were some centres that preferred to ask their own questions on the text rather than using the suggested questions from the Teacher/Examiner booklet. This is quite acceptable provided that these questions manage to stretch candidates and allow them show off their abilities in terms of textual analysis and response to a written stimulus. Simply asking a candidate to summarize the first paragraph, for example, might not always give such opportunities.

In Section B, most candidates performed very much in line with their linguistic ability. Nevertheless, some candidates had obviously relied far too much on pre-learned responses to questions they were hoping to be asked, and this approach lacked the element of spontaneity needed to attract good marks in Grid E.2. At the risk of repeating a point made in previous reports, carefully prepared sequences of mini presentations in response to pre-learned questions from the teacher/examiner will absolutely **not** be enough to get through the second section of the test with a decent tally of marks.

With regard to the documentation involved in centres for this test, once again there were a number of needless 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 are disregarded by the actual examiner. The checklist below (as published on many previous occasions) really is worth bearing in mind before centres send the script parcel to the examiner/upload recordings onto the Repository:

<p>Each recording of each test for each candidate must have TWO accompanying documents.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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 carbonised register in the envelope with the address label provided by OCR.</p>

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Texts A, B and C

Texto A (*¿Se deberían prohibir los parques zoológicos en España?*), *Texto B* (*Un español en Cuba*) and *Texto C* (*El 'éxito' de la pizza en España*) managed to provide most candidates with ample material to sustain a mature conversation with the teacher/examiner. Many candidates really got under the skin of the texts and responded to them fully and intelligently. They dealt effectively with the questions asked both on the text and on the themes of the text. The development of ideas and the ability to express and justify points of view were very much in evidence. All three texts were largely accessible and most candidates dealt well with the inevitable complexities and challenges involved in such demanding textual analysis.

There were few, if any, serious misinterpretations of any of the texts although in *Texto B* many candidates thought the question “*¿A ti te gusta vivir en este país?*” was a reference to living in Cuba rather than a reference to living in the United Kingdom. Also, in *Texto C*, some candidates were confused by the reference to “*dietas 'milagro'*” and so, rather sensibly, asked the teacher/examiner for clarification before giving their response. This is to be recommended as a decent coping strategy. Other than this, the texts served their purpose well and the responses from candidates were generally positive and meaningful.

Section B: General Conversation

Many candidates were able to perform well in this section, especially in Grid M (Development of Ideas), since they had sensibly researched their selected topic/s very thoroughly indeed. There continue to be some very thorough research skills amongst MFL Advanced Level candidates sitting this unit. The majority of topics were appropriate and complied fully with the requirements of the Specification.

In terms of the language used by candidates, the areas of Spanish grammar that caused the most difficulty were similar to those of previous years.

The need to ensure that adjectives agree with their nouns caught many candidates out at all levels of ability. Even very common utterances such as “*Esto es un problema seria...*”[sic.] and “*Hay numerosos asuntos que son grave...*”[sic.] caused a good number of candidates a range of problems. Also, confusion regarding the differences in usage between the verbs *ser* and *estar* was still apparent in many candidates' responses to the questions asked. There was also a noticeable tendency this year for candidates to show only partial understanding of radical-changing verbs. Utterances such as “*En el futuro, volveré a casa de mis padres...*” and “*...a ver si me acuerdo...*” were not uncommon. However, there were numerous examples of candidates using language that was characterised by a high and consistent level of accuracy and complexity. Tenses were used smartly and many candidates were able to demonstrate good understanding of the need to produce a wide range of vocabulary and idiom in response to the questions asked in Section A and well as in the topic discussion in section B.

F724 Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments:

The paper worked well; it allowed candidates to show knowledge and skills across the range, achieving marks from the highest to the very low. The subject matter of the listening and reading texts raised no particular difficulties for candidates. Overall, candidates seemed well prepared for the examination. Only a few left some questions unanswered. There was no obvious evidence of candidates' being short of time to complete the paper. However, an area of continuing concern was the essay question, which some candidates again treated as a general essay without seeing the need to provide detailed information specific to the title.

In a few cases, candidates answered questions in the wrong language. Poor, or very poor, handwriting was an issue on some scripts, as was the use of asterisks and arrows to indicate extra parts of answers written in other parts of the booklet. It would be preferable if candidates took care with their handwriting and planned their answers before writing them. Some candidates offered Examiners a choice of answers, indicated by brackets or a forward slash, which is clearly not acceptable.

Judging from some scripts, a few candidates were apparently entered for this examination with little preparation for the specific tasks they would have to complete. They have probably lost marks as a result, because they did not complete the tasks as required.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Listening

Task 1

There were a few instances in which candidates disregarded the rubric and answered fully or partly in Spanish. This invalidated the answer(s).

The marking rewarded understanding of the recorded Spanish text and the ability to express that meaning in clear and unambiguous English.

- a) Although most candidates appeared to understand the Spanish, this question was often poorly answered because of the need to express the answer in clear English. Some included the phrase *ocio nocturno* in their answer, while others made reference to the sea, the ocean, or the north. Strong candidates were able to transfer *área de ocio nocturno* into normal English in a pleasing variety of elegant ways.
- b) Most answers showed the candidates understood that the doctor had to leave town for the weekend in order to be able to sleep and then carry out surgery safely; *campo* was strangely challenging to some candidates, as was the detail of the doctor's fear over his trembling hand in the operating theatre. Some candidates referred to the doctor 'operating patients', as opposed to operating on them.
- c) This was a challenging question, with many candidates declaring or implying that the girl had been partying, whereas the loud parties had been below her window - any idea that the noise came from parties in the area of her house was accepted.

- d) Marking rewarded various appropriate translations of *vecinos*. Only some candidates understood that ‘neighbours’ or ‘neighbours of the zone’ would not work in the context of the text.
- e) This was generally well done. To answer the question, candidates needed to point out that there were specific laws in existence against noise and that it was the bars or their owners that did not enforce them. Most candidates were able to infer the meaning of the challenging word *incumplimiento*. A few referred simply to ‘owners’, without specifying that the people owned bars.
- f) This straightforward question was answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates; a few could not render *internacional* into English or thought it meant ‘national’, but all were able to find some rendering for the name of the day as a special day to oppose noise or noise pollution.
- g) The point here was to realise that the people mentioned lived in areas officially recognised as noisy.
- h) There was a mixed performance here for this challenging question, with many answering about ‘extra hours’, or that ‘corresponding time off was not given’, rather than that ‘overtime was not paid’.

Task 2

Generally speaking, candidates scored higher marks where they concentrated on answering the question in their own words, rather than transcribing extracts from the interview.

- a) Candidates usually gave the relevant information in a correct, simple answer connecting the scientist or his work and the university. Excessive transcription usually resulted in an incorrect answer.
- b) Most candidates managed to score a mark here. Surprisingly for some the challenge was the word *severos*; the spelling of this word was colourfully varied.
- c) Three straightforward answers were needed here: (i) the difficulty was the lack of resources; (ii) the solution mentioned was to collaborate with others; and (iii) the advantage was that Spanish scientists enjoyed their work to the extent that it was like a hobby for them. Most answered correctly for (i); there were issues with spelling in (ii). There were for (iii) some very good answers, explaining the idea, but some managed to lose the idea in their paraphrases. Where the word ‘hobby’ was used, a wide range of spellings was accepted, provided it was specified that it was science that was their hobby.
- d) This was a simple question about young scientists working in universities without pay. However, some weaker candidates stated that these young people studied in university for free.
- e) Almost universally well answered. Strong candidates understood that *un futuro mejor* was all that was needed to answer the question. Excessive transcription usually obscured the answer.
- f) This question required candidates to reword the original text. Most understood that the Spanish scientists were working abroad, but not all spotted that the use of public money was in the past during their training.

- g) Careless attempts at transcription here sometimes led to answers that were unclear or inappropriate. The verb *desarrollar* was sometimes written incorrectly.
- h) The majority of candidates understood the question and picked out the corresponding relevant sentence in the interview, signalled by the phrase *frente de alegrías*. The stronger candidates used the fairly straightforward nature of the answer to show their ability to paraphrase, for example using *resolver* instead of *solucionar*. A few answered wrongly that most of all he enjoyed the clinic or the atmosphere there.
- i) Not all candidates set aside the initial reference in the interview to depression, which was not related to this particular scientist. However, most understood the positive drive of *impulso* and answered correctly.
- j) While most candidates seemed to have understood at least part of the message in the interview, this question was a good opportunity for those with stronger composition skills to create a clear and unambiguous answer, avoiding doubt as to whose knowledge and enthusiasm was being discussed. Only the strongest candidates were able to see the relevance to the question of the interviewer's question *¿Por qué decidió usted investigar sobre los problemas de vista?* and so give a proper explanation of *mi camino*.
- k) This simple question was answered correctly by almost all with the information that the eye surgeon wore glasses; the main issue was the spelling of the verb *llevar*. In addition, a few wrote incorrectly *llevan gafas*.
- l)
 - (i) Most candidates scored one mark for recognising that his eyes were healthy.
 - (ii) Fewer candidates realised that he was concerned about the specific risk of an operation on his eyes.
- m) The majority of candidates were able to identify the key idea that the patients had undergone previous treatments *sin éxito*.
- n) Good answers in general. *Evaluar la seguridad de los procedimientos* could not be accepted as it did not answer the question set.
- o) Well answered generally. Almost all candidates understood that a short and simple answer was sufficient here. A few weaker candidates answered wrongly that more patients were needed.

Section B: Reading

Task 3

- a) Expected answers were simple preterite tenses to record that in 2010 cinemas closed and workers lost their jobs. These proved to be challenging tasks for some candidates, both in terms of tense and spelling.
- b) There were good answers from candidates who generally understood that *10 euros o más-imposible* meant that people did not have the money to buy such expensive tickets.
- c) This answer required rephrasing of the original text to say 'the system needs to be modernised', but also accepted were sensible inferences such as that 'the system is old or not modern'.
- d) Almost all candidates answered correctly with *cuesta*, but some made the verb plural or had an incorrect spelling. Some used an acceptable longer paraphrase.

- e) A variety of phrases meaning ‘in the long term’ were used by candidates and accepted by Examiners. Answers were generally good.
- f) About half the candidates scored the mark. Credit was given for the idea of watching or downloading films illegally or without paying. Some knew the verb *piratear* based on *piratería* (which was in the text), some used other correct versions of the same concept (eg *pirata*). Examiners accepted various recognisable misspellings here.

Task 4

Marks ranged from 4 to, occasionally, 0. Most candidates scored 2 or 3 marks. Stronger candidates were clearly able to read very carefully paragraph 3 to gain an overall understanding before attempting the questions.

Task 5

This task was completed well by those candidates who had clearly practised this kind of exercise. They ensured that their phrase began in the right place and avoided adding superfluous words after the required phrase. There were very few misspellings. A few candidates translated the phrases into English and scored no marks.

- a) Stronger candidates understood that *copiando* alone was not sufficient to express the additional idea of *lo que ya habían hecho*.
- b) Careful candidates realised that *se inauguraron* did not have the idea of doing something again and so avoided *reabrieron*, preferring *comenzaron a funcionar*.
- c) The majority of candidates successfully identified that the structure of *no hizo falta ofrecer* was similar to the words in this question.
- d) A very wide range of candidates scored this mark, recognising the similar structure and meaning in the phrases *acudían a ver películas de calidad* and *iban a ver buen cine*.

Task 6

- a)
 - (i) Many candidates understood that the film-goers were in charge, but that idea was not always expressed in clear Spanish.
 - (ii) This was generally well answered, with stronger candidates finding synonyms for *asamblea*.
- b) Most candidates spotted the importance of *buen precio*; some struggled to express the idea of the building being rented for that price. Some weaker candidates appeared not to understand who the *propietarios* were.
- c) Explaining the two numbers turned out to be a significant challenge, partly because the answers had to be expressed in the candidate’s own words. Examiners were looking to reward simple answers, such as
 - (i) *querían tener mil miembros* and
 - (ii) *la gente pagaba cien euros para ser socio*. Selective transcriptions did not provide suitable answers. The simpler item (ii) was better answered than item (i).

- d) This was generally well answered. It was a challenge only to the weakest candidates; stronger candidates were able to use a wide range of paraphrases here to refer to buying reduced price tickets.
- e) This was a challenging question requiring careful reading of the text to see that a member could join any or all of the committees and that the task of the committees was to organise the events taking place in the cinema.
- f) Simple transcription did not answer the question. Most candidates were able to express the idea in their own words.

Task 7

Examiners credited answers that used correct English to transfer clearly and unambiguously the full meaning of the Spanish text, without omitting or adding any elements. Correct English spelling was required for full marks; too often 'achieve' was misspelt and 'German' and 'Spaniards' were written without their capital letter. Performance varied from the highest to the lowest marks. Some candidates appeared to have little awareness of the requirements of this task, with one providing a lengthy commentary in English on the subject matter rather than a *transfer of meaning*, although a few produced elegant and fluent texts that were a pleasure to read.

Vocabulary items that posed a challenge were: *intentan, instalarse, llegar +infinitive, aun así, tener suerte, lo que queda por saber*. Only a few translated appropriately *casi tan importante como...* with *casi* usually omitted or translated as *just* and a fair number of candidates not able to use the 'as...as...' comparative in English.

Task 8

Examiners rewarded simple and accurate paraphrases of the expressions given, as long as these avoided re-use of significant words from the question. Candidates were directed to the phrases in the original text where the phrases were underlined; seeing the phrases in context undoubtedly helped candidates to answer these questions appropriately. Some candidates seemed to have had little practice with this kind of exercise. Some translated the phrases into English. Some re-used words from the original expression or did not reflect the relevant person or tense of the verb.

- a) There were two elements to render: spending a long time in work or work experience (e.g. *trabajar mucho tiempo*) and poor pay (e.g. *sin ganar mucho dinero*).
- b) An answer was wanted which reflected the decisive nature of his action, such as *tomó su decision final* or *tomó una decision importante* or *hizo algo decisivo*.
- c) A straightforward acceptable answer was *Era jefe de un grupo*. Many used *jefe* only to invalidate the answer by re-using *equipo* from the original. However, a noticeable group of candidates thought Ángel was being told what to do by the group, rather than Ángel being the boss.

Task 9

In this task and task 10, some candidates apparently made the assumption that Rosario was a man's name and that Ángel was a woman's name. Examiners tried to ensure that candidates were not penalised because of this unfortunate confusion.

Candidates needed to complete sentence stems, providing the relevant information and using appropriate syntax. For some candidates, using the correct tense was one of the challenges in this task.

- a) Generally well answered by candidates who appreciated the meaning of *le resultaron insuficientes...* Candidates needed to paraphrase, in the relevant tense, to say that he did not manage to get a good job.
- b) Generally well answered, although some did not realise that the idea of 'per hour' was needed for the answer to make sense.
- c) As expected, this was a challenging question (*Hace cinco años...*) answered correctly by stronger candidates; it required good understanding and the ability to rephrase into one's own words.
- d) Most answers were correct, although a few had an inappropriate tense. Some incorrectly reported that his mother received money from her son, rather than her supporting him financially.
- e) Stronger candidates understood the relevant part of the text and the import of this stem and therefore used appropriate idiomatic Spanish. Full marks were given to less idiomatic phrases that nonetheless conveyed the idea that it took him 4 days of searching to find a job in Berlin. Weaker candidates misunderstood and wrote, for example, that he worked for four days in a restaurant in Berlin.

Task 10

- a) Mostly well answered, although some candidates thought that she was asking for or giving advice about emigrating.
- b) Well answered in general.
- c) (i) Only stronger candidates realised that, for the answer to make sense, it had to say that they knew no-one on their arrival in their new country. A noticeable proportion of candidates used *saber* incorrectly in this answer.
(ii) Well answered generally, although sometimes expressed in the singular, as if it referred to Ángel rather than all the young people in similar circumstances to Ángel's.
- d) Most candidates scored at least one mark by providing one of the three ideas possible to answer this question: they were dissatisfied, they had poor job opportunities, and they left the country.
- e) (i) A straightforward question for the majority of candidates.
(ii) Some candidates just copied *los motivos del viaje* from the text; without an introductory verb the phrase did not answer the question.
- f) A straightforward question for the majority of candidates.
- g) Varied performance for this question which required candidates to express Rosario's idea that *la mejor gente para nuestro futuro se nos va*.

Section C: Essay questions

Qn 11.

This question was under the topic of law and order. The best answers considered the whole quotation, i.e. the situation regarding crimes against women in the context of criminality as a whole; they also wondered whether there were other exceptions to the alleged decrease in crime that should be considered as well as crimes against women. Many candidates showed themselves to be well informed on all aspects of this title. Stronger candidates used knowledge about domestic violence to advantage in the general context of the question and avoided writing solely about the issue of domestic violence.

Qn 12.

Most candidates followed the rubric and wrote about a single disadvantaged group of which they were a member. The essay required both a creative and factual element, which proved to be a challenge for some candidates despite the existence of well-known events and incidents that were clearly relevant to this essay. Candidates wrote in the personae of, among others, a Rumanian immigrant, a gay activist, a gypsy or an immigrant from North Africa. A certain number of candidates showed a lack of preparation for the topic.

Qn 13.

This was the most popular essay choice. Many candidates showed they had researched the topic and answered the question appropriately. The title allowed for a straightforward discussion of the positive and negative aspects of Spanish policy and actions regarding the environment; the best candidates could choose from a wide range of environmental issues and cases to back up their arguments. As such, most were able to show a reasonable amount of factual knowledge to support their arguments. Stronger candidates showed a more sophisticated analysis, with awareness of the sometimes differing actions, attitudes and motives of individuals and government.

Qn 14.

A few candidates successfully took advantage of the creative format to express their passion as well as their sound knowledge about alternative energy in Spain, although many struggled to combine factual information, argument and the creative element required to address this title. A certain number of candidates showed a distinct lack of preparation for the topic.

Qn 15.

Performance on this question was poor. Candidates generally had little relevant information. The majority of candidates paid no attention to the question set and most omitted to provide examples from the relevant countries. Many candidates chose to write about both school and work; they also chose to write generally about digital technology and its advantages and disadvantages for young people, rather than identifying the main effect of digital technology in Spain in either school or work, with suitable evidence. Many answers were full of generalisations and assertions, rather than evidence and argument. Candidates tended to confuse the technology and its effects e.g. saying the most notable effect of digital technology in Spain is the existence of the internet. A certain number of candidates showed a distinct lack of preparation for the topic.

Qn 16.

Candidates revealed little knowledge of the situation in Spain regarding its public health system, which has been so topical in recent years. Answers tended to consist of rather superficial description and only a very small amount of factual information.

Qn 17.

There were relatively few answers to this question. However, it allowed interested candidates to demonstrate knowledge of a work of art that they had studied. The strongest candidates were able to display some analysis of how that work had set out to challenge the way people thought. Sometimes this was done well, using specific aspects of the work and the historical context of the work to back up arguments. In some cases, however, the essays were predominantly narrative and descriptive, lacking in relevant argument.

Qn 18.

Answers covered a range of historical episodes or elements, for example the Cuban revolution, life as an anarchist in Barcelona in the civil war, the *transición* seen from a woman's point of view, the effect of the dictatorship in Cataluña or the Basque country, and life in Bilbao during the city's transformation from industrial powerhouse to cultural icon. Many answered on the dictatorship and most were able to show at least some knowledge of that period, even if sometimes rather general and vague. One or two strong essays made some sensible comments about Spain today and attitudes that may have come from the past; weaker candidates tended to make rather sweeping, unsubstantiated statements about how, for example, the predominance of Catholicism during the dictatorship has supposedly led to increased racism today. Some candidates did not follow the rubric and chose more than one episode or element; some essays were purely of a descriptive type and failed to address the essay title.

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