

Reports on the Units

June 2010

J732/J132/R/10

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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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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Spanish (J732 J132)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

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Unit A721

The entry for this unit was very low as the legacy specification (1928) was still available. This observation should be borne in mind when considering the comments below, as the candidate responses available did not cover the full range of grades at either tier.

The examination achieved a spread of marks and there appeared to be no indication of misinterpretation of rubric or insufficient time to complete the test.

The tiers of entry determined by the centres for their candidates appeared to be appropriate.

Foundation Tier

The first three exercises were generally well answered and there did not appear to be any specific difficulties with the exception of questions 9 and 20 which caused difficulties for some candidates.

In exercises 4 and 5 weaker candidates began to find the material challenging. In exercise 4 questions 26 and 30 caused the most difficulties, while the other questions in this exercise were answered correctly by around three quarters of the candidates. In exercise 5 candidates scored uniformly well with only question 35 causing some difficulty.

Higher Tier

The small cohort scored nearly full marks in the first two exercises.

In exercise 3 there was a spread of marks. The best answered questions were 13 and 19, and those causing the most difficulty were 14 and 17.

In exercise 4 most difficulty was encountered in question 23, in particular part (b). Best answered were questions 21 and 22.

In exercise 5 candidates found the material challenging. This is to be expected in an exercise targeted at grade A*. Best answered were questions 28 and 32, while questions 27, 29, 30 and 31 caused the most difficulty.

Unit A722

As this was the first year of the specification, this report not only comments on the work submitted this session but also aims to give some general advice for those centres that will enter candidates for the first time in 2011.

Moderators felt that the candidates had been given every opportunity to demonstrate their ability in Spanish. The tasks undertaken were personalised which, it was felt, served to motivate the candidates to produce very individual performances. The questioning techniques employed by the teachers were effective and supportive and the administration was wholly accurate. The recording quality of the tests was good and no problems were experienced by moderators in carrying out their role. The application of the assessment criteria was in one case generously applied. The attention of teachers is drawn to the Communication criteria where a range of response types is described. A candidate who communicates only in very brief utterances, delivered in short phrases rather than full sentences, is unlikely to earn marks above the 4-5 mark band.

Topic choice

Centres submitted a number of topics. As stated above, an element of choice is more likely to motivate candidates, and teachers must recognise that, even when candidates are working on the same topic, they will be required to work independently on their subject matter during their task preparation time so that a 'common template' approach is inappropriate.

Pace of delivery

If a presentation-type task is chosen, it is important that teachers continue to encourage candidates to adopt a steady pace so as not to undermine the delivery of their ideas. During the life span of the legacy specification much improvement was experienced in this area so that garbled presentations, where poor delivery and the resulting poor communication reduced the marks awarded, were all but eliminated.

Teacher participation

Ideally, teachers should guide and support their candidates through the test without being intrusive. Some candidates will benefit from a greater level of support where others should be encouraged to display independence and initiative of others so that they may access the higher range of marks available. Teachers need to be careful not to interrupt unnecessarily, perhaps curtailing the flow of expression of candidates.

Questioning technique

The teacher's role in using an appropriate questioning technique is paramount if candidates are to be allowed to demonstrate their ability. For example, closed questions are of very limited usefulness. Even for weaker candidates, their use should be kept to a minimum, for example to gently introduce a particular area or a point the teacher will invite the candidate to expand or to begin the redirection of a candidate who has misunderstood a question. Complex questions, suitable for highly performing candidates, will confuse weaker candidates, while asking very able candidates only simple questions will not give them the opportunity to demonstrate fully the extent of their ability. Therefore, judicious, individualised questioning is advised in order to bring out the best in each candidate and to provide a sensitive approach throughout the test. A set of prepared questions used for all candidates would be inappropriate.

Timing

Tests should last between four and six minutes in total and it is worth pointing out that OCR moderators are instructed to listen to no more than six minutes. It is also worth bearing in mind that unnecessarily long tests tire candidates and teacher alike and can lead to a poorer performance overall.

Recording quality

Tests must be submitted either on CD or electronically via OCR's Repository and centres will need to reflect their choice of mode of submission in their entry code. Therefore, teachers are advised to make their choice early; to test recording equipment in good time; to check regularly the quality and volume level of their recordings and to ensure that CDs are finalised and therefore can be played and heard on other equipment, for example another CD player or laptop.

Administration

Centres are reminded to follow closely OCR's instructions for identifying candidates' tests if they are to be submitted electronically via the Repository as this can assist teachers in uploading work more quickly and efficiently. If they are recorded on CD, centres are reminded to label both the disc and the disc case or envelope with the details of the centre and the candidates recorded. In addition, this information should be added electronically to the disc. Teachers are also asked to acquaint themselves in good time with the forms that need to be submitted especially as the procedures will be new to most centres in 2011.

Reports

Centres will receive an individual report written by the moderator who assessed their speaking tests. As always, we will endeavour to advise on areas which may assist teachers to elicit improved performances from their candidates and to access higher marks where appropriate.

Teachers should also refer to the comments in the Principal Moderator Reports for GCSE French and German. Both reports are available on the OCR website.

Unit A723

The entry for this unit was very low as the legacy specification (1928) was still available. This observation should be borne in mind when considering the comments below.

The examination achieved a spread of marks and there appeared to be no indication of misinterpretation of rubric or insufficient time to complete the test. On another positive note, there was an extremely low incidence rate of candidates not attempting a question.

Some candidates entered for Foundation Tier scored very high marks and may have been able to do well on the Higher Tier paper.

Foundation Tier

The first three exercises were generally well answered and there did not appear to be any specific difficulties. In exercise 4 it became noticeable that certain questions proved more challenging for the candidates. For example, *intento siempre comer bien* was not always recognised correctly, in answer to question 27 and, in question 28, some could not provide a correct translation of *verduras* in English to gain the mark. Some candidates had difficulty with question 29 but others dealt well with *recibo a los clientes* and one candidate was able to translate *limpio los vestuarios* accurately.

Candidates found difficulty in exercise 5 with *ajedrez* in question 33, which was the least successfully answered question in the exercise. Some were successful in question 39 but *rapidez* and *contra el reloj* proved difficult for others.

Higher Tier

The small cohort scored full marks in the first three exercises. In exercise 4, most difficulty was encountered in question 29 where candidates did not fully understand *se notaba la falta de tecnología electrónica*.

In exercise 5, *diariamente* was well understood, leading to success in question 34 but questions 36 and 37 were more troublesome. Some candidates did not understand *lentamente* and therefore could not correctly select *rápidas* for question 36 while, in question 37, the link between *la publicidad es excesiva* in the text and *anuncios* in the possible answers was not made.

Unit A724

There was a very small cohort for this unit. Therefore, this report not only comments on the work submitted this session but also aims to give some general advice to centres that will enter candidates for the first time in 2011.

Centres are requested to pay particular attention to the Topic Area and the Purpose, which must be clearly stated on the Writing Notes form (Candidates). Please note:

- The Topic Area must be referenced (see page 7 of the Specification);
- The Purpose should state clearly the type of piece (for example an e-mail, an article, a web-blog, a letter etc) and the candidate should use the appropriate register for the task;
- Candidates must submit two pieces, each from a different Topic Area and for a different Purpose.

Centres are reminded that the aim of Controlled Assessment in Writing is to prepare candidates to be able to 'convey information and express and justify points of view' (see page 11 of the Specification). This should be the starting point in designing tasks and planning delivery in the classroom. Centres can design their own tasks or use the OCR exemplar tasks (see the 'Guide to Controlled Assessment in Modern Foreign Languages – Writing').

Candidates should be encouraged to develop personal responses to tasks. Since they will be required to work independently on the subject matter during their task preparation time, it is reasonable to expect that candidates will produce individual pieces of work appropriate to their ability.

An element of choice is intended to motivate candidates and where possible teachers may consider adapting tasks to suit individual interests. Additionally, it is good practice to vary tasks year-on-year to avoid the risk of plagiarism.

Please note that the word count should be relatively balanced between the two pieces submitted.

- Candidates aiming at grades C - A* should produce up to 600 words across the two tasks.
- Candidates aiming at grades G - D should produce up to 350 words across the two tasks.

Some pieces submitted this year were significantly shorter than the targeted word count. Centres are alerted to the fact that very short submissions may not allow candidates to access the full mark range.

Teachers should also refer to the comments in the Principal Examiner Reports for GCSE French and German. Both reports are available on the OCR website.

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