

# **Report on the Units**

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**January 2010**

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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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### AS GCE/ADVANCED GCE SPANISH – H077/H477

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## F721: Speaking

### General comments

This was the second examination for the new Specification and all tests are now externally marked. Centres are reminded that there are two options for recording the tests - option 01 is for Centres wishing to send a CD of the tests to the marking examiner and option 02, to upload the mp3 file directly to the OCR Repository. In either case markers need the headed working mark sheet and topic form for each candidate and tests should be sent / uploaded for marking immediately. Where no candidate is present for the test it is still important to send the attendance register to the marking examiner.

The two sections of the Speaking test are equally weighted at 30 marks each. For Section A, the role play, stimulus materials should be given to candidates following the order given in the examiner's booklet.

The topic chosen for discussion in Section B must refer to the Spanish-speaking context and be taken from the topic areas for AS given in the Specifications. Where candidates choose to base the discussion on, for example, a film or a book, the subject matter must clearly be shown to be relevant to the AS topic areas as listed in the Specification and not be treated in isolation. Outlining a plot, describing the characters or style, telling the story or giving a person's biography without showing how the material is relevant to the topic area heading as a whole will not be adequate to meet the requirements of the Specification. Centres are also reminded that candidates do not give an initial presentation.

We stress again that Section A is a role play and is essentially an interactive task-related exercise: although candidates need to refer constantly to the stimulus material, it is not primarily a reading comprehension test or summary. Candidate and teacher / examiner must engage in an exchange to complete the task ( *tarea* ) on the candidate's sheet. Transmission of relevant information and an ability to persuade or give reassurance are both important elements assessed in the mark scheme.

Half of the marks for the role play are available for Use of Stimulus, so candidates must be allowed the opportunity to provide the relevant information from the material in accordance with the bullet points on the candidate / examiner sheets. However, just inviting the candidate to summarise or translate the document, with little or no interaction with the teacher / examiner, will not allow access to the full range of ten marks for the Response to Examiner grid and to show appropriate initiative or imagination.

Some candidates depended heavily on the teacher / examiner to set the pace or maintain the momentum of the exchange. The role play was essentially a question-and-answer routine with little expansion or initiative. However, many better performing candidates related the information to the needs of the examiner in role and remembered to recommend, suggest or reassure.

Some candidates continue to find it challenging to manipulate the introductory questions to obtain information from the examiner at the start of the role play, even with using basic questioning formulas such as when? how? how many? Further practice is recommended.

Quality of language varied considerably. Although most candidates were at least in mid-range upwards, a number of candidates had difficulty with essential verb forms, especially beyond present tense. Essential vocabulary for the role plays was not generally a problem, though occasionally teachers asked questions that gave away some items.

We repeat earlier advice that:

- candidates should concentrate on the task itself, paraphrasing the essential information rather than trying to translate the actual English wording in the stimulus materials
- candidates should be reminded of and be given the opportunity to use as wide a range of language as is possible or appropriate in the role plays
- teachers / examiners should ask questions of differing types.

In Section B, the topic section, the important element is “discussion”. Candidates may be permitted a brief introductory statement to set the context for their topic but must not be allowed to let this become a speech or presentation. Candidates were sometimes invited to give a series of mini-statements, on each of the headings on their topic forms, but with little interlinking or interaction with the teacher / examiner. Candidates need sufficient information to illustrate the topic but the key criteria for Grid D require ideas, opinions and relevance and the candidate must be able to explain these ideas and justify the relevance of the point of view taken in relation to the AS topic area chosen.

The majority of candidates had prepared their topic material well and the standard was encouraging. Although there were a few instances where candidates barely went beyond GCSE with regard to the complexity or choice of topic, many were prepared to go beyond anecdote or description and could place their topic within a wider context, with ideas, examples and a degree of analysis.

Teacher / examiners must guard against over-rehearsal and avoid pseudo discussion. All candidates should be given the opportunity to deal with the unexpected, albeit within the predictable context of their subject headings. Those candidates who did not or could not interact with the examiner and discuss the material, lost out in Grid E.1 for spontaneity where the lower bands of marks refer to fluency being confined to pre-learnt material. A key indication of higher-band candidates was that they appeared to understand the topic under discussion and were not limited to a few points or ideas they had gathered third hand.

Language quality was often higher in Section A than in Section B, though some disparity was evident when candidates were called upon to speak more spontaneously. Candidates took care to include some higher-level structures but at the expense of accuracy in some simpler contexts, such as agreements, verb forms, genders.

Many candidates' pronunciation was good or very good with only with some cases of anglicised pronunciation. Intonation was not good in some cases and this, together with incorrect stress, was particularly noticeable when candidates were giving prepared answers.

### **Comment on individual questions**

**Role play A** was a brochure describing a car hire company. The candidate's task was to explain the contents of the brochure and to convince a client (the examiner) of the usefulness of hiring a car.

The five main bullet points were details of the company, its main attraction, how to take delivery of a car, conditions of hire and how to get more information.

The company kept its prices low by renting older cars than other, more expensive, companies and operating throughout the UK. Most candidates transmitted the sum of this information, though sometimes only partially. Higher-level candidates linked the nationwide nature of the company with flexibility for returning the car. Not all candidates were able to give clear information about the extra costs involved for this (a £10 fee) or the fact that a car could be delivered to the client's hotel (small extra charge).

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Relatively few candidates attempted to reassure the client that there was no compromise to safety or reliability by stressing that the cars were carefully checked before hiring.

The conditions of hire were sometimes only partially made. A number of teacher / examiners helpfully invented another member of their family as a possible driver to draw out this information.

Surprisingly, some candidates missed that the only further charge was for petrol and some struggled with vocabulary for tax and insurance. Prompting was sometimes necessary to gain information about the £100 damage excess. Most candidates coped well with the special weekend price – occasionally mistakenly conveyed as Monday to Friday - and it was usually the better-prepared candidates to point out that the car hire period could be for any length of time.

Candidates were generally prepared to give telephone / website details for further information, though some were less confident with numbers or gave a website address with English “dot com”.

Vocabulary was only occasionally a problem; most candidates used some manipulation with *barato* or *económico* for “low-cost”. There was confusion (sometimes also among teacher / examiners) of *alquilar* / *alquiler* and *ahorrar* was often mispronounced; *por más largo tiempo* was also frequent.

Candidates were not always able to distinguish clearly between *recoger*, *entregar*, *devolver*, etc., which led to some ambiguities when explaining add-on charges. *Libras* was a challenge – many candidates were quoting a “ten-book” supplementary charge. *Petróleo* was at least as common as *gasolina*; *licencia* was often used (or guessed) for “driving licence” and there were several uses of *carta de crédito*.

The more-open questions differentiated effectively between candidates. Many concentrated abstractly on the benefits of the public transport element – it tended to be the more articulate candidates who pointed out some of the greater flexibility or convenience of having a hire car. A whole range of *recomendaciones para excursiones* was mentioned, though some candidates tended to mention names of places with little regard to the *en coche* aspect.

**Role play B** was a visit to a place of interest – a famous garden - and was generally well done.

Main bullet points for content focused on an overview of the attraction, its special appeal for garden lovers, its location and facilities for groups and other information that may be relevant to the party.

Most candidates clearly conveyed that Wisley was a garden, though some omitted why it might be particularly important – its age, status, etc. Most gave details of its location, this was sometimes a little vague - “*en el A23*” – and some mention of “*carretera*” or similar would have been more helpful. Proximity to London was generally mentioned, but “20 miles” and “summer” element for the special bus proved to be a challenge for some candidates.

Candidates showed commendable ingenuity in some cases when describing the constituent gardens including “*casas de vidrio*” (though many knew *invernadero*). The garden centre was generally included, though the availability of experts to give advice was not always mentioned. The shop and catering facilities were well conveyed, with some candidates embroidering the advantages these offer – meals to suit all diets, etc. – but the alternative picnic area was sometimes overlooked.

Candidates who had seized on the fact that the client was travelling with a group were able to point out the reductions available and the availability of a free car park but sometimes the points that the group would be travelling by coach and that these were welcomed “by arrangement”

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were not made. It seemed that only the better prepared candidates brought out the possible advantages of membership and the other gardens to which access could be gained.

Linguistic hurdles included: “miles” and numbers – “100 years”, “10,000 varieties”, “140 gardens” – confusion of *cien / ciento, mil / miles*. Few candidates included the *a* with distance (*a veinte millas de Londres*). Otherwise there were few problems.

The open questions were reasonably well dealt with and differentiated effectively.

**Role play C** took an element of daily life – problems with noisy neighbours – as its theme.

The main bullet points included giving an overview of the pamphlet, recommended action if the problem continues, what to do in more serious cases, what the authorities can and cannot do and how to obtain further information – following the points made in the pamphlet.

Comparatively few candidates gave examples of the kind of noise that could be a problem but moved straight away to the advice given about discussing the problem with the neighbour first. The fact that the neighbour may not be aware that there is a problem was not always clearly made.

Keeping a diary of problems and noting down details was generally mentioned and all managed to convey the idea of complaining to some kind of authority

Although some active prompting was occasionally required from teacher / examiners, candidates were generally able to give information on the main areas where councils could or could not intervene.

Details of the helpline and website were generally forthcoming, albeit with some linguistic uncertainty.

Key vocabulary – as is usual - was included by way of reminder in the candidate’s information – *ruido, autoridades, vecino, problema / problemático*, etc. Some candidates struggled with the idea of noting down problems in a diary, but generally used *escribir ... diario*, which was acceptable. “Complain to your council” was a problem if a candidate attempted to translate the English stimulus literally, but most candidates were able to paraphrase appropriately, some using *ayuntamiento*, which was an appropriate concept. “One-off party” was not always clear, but the majority used some variant of *solo, ocasión*, etc. “Emergency” was usually *emergencia* rather than *urgencia*, and the “500” in the telephone number was “*cincocientos*” and not *quinientos*.

There were some good suggestions on being a good neighbour in response to the first open question, though for the second issue - on noise today - candidates tended to give examples of types of noise rather than saying whether this was a general problem nowadays.

## **F722: Spanish: Listening, Reading and Writing 1**

### **General Comments**

The majority of candidates entered for this January's examination were of a standard appropriate to the qualification. There were only a few candidates who were not yet ready to be tested at this level.

Candidates at the upper end of the ability range displayed excellent skills in comprehending and writing Spanish.

With many of the mid-range candidates there was a noticeable difference between the marks achieved for the receptive skills of listening (Tasks 1, 2 and 3) and reading (Task 5), and the productive skill of writing.

There were a number of candidates who seemed to be from a Spanish speaking background. Such candidates typically achieve high marks when comprehension is tested, write a phonetical version of the language they have heard spoken around them, and frequently show unfamiliarity with the techniques required to answer some of the questions.

Time management seemed to be good and the allocation of two and a half hours seemed to be perfectly adequate. When answers to questions were omitted this appeared to be due to inability or oversight rather than lack of time.

A number of candidates would have clearly benefited from practice in the techniques required to complete Task 7 as more than one third of the marks for this examination are to be found here. It is disappointing to see candidates who had performed well in the previous questions fail to do themselves justice here because of poor exam technique.

### **Comments on individual questions**

#### **TAREA 1**

Most candidates either coped well or very well with the first listening task. Full marks were not uncommon, and only a few candidates went badly astray. Incorrect answers were offered most frequently for e), h) and i)

#### **TAREA 2**

The gapped summary of a listening test is a more demanding test. The more able candidates rose to the challenge admirably, whereas others encountered difficulty. Common errors included: b) '*enviar*'; c) confusion with '*estupendamente*', '*frecuentemente*', '*emocionante*' and '*preocupante*', which had a knock on effect on other answers; d) '*protestó*' - presumably through misunderstanding of the meaning of '*asistió*'; e) '*tarde*'; j) '*pescarlos*' - conjuring up the delightful picture of young royals fishing for dolphins!

### TAREA 3

This task was generally done very well. It requires candidates to understand what is said in the recording and also to write with precision in English in some questions.

Questions a), b) and c) only troubled a small minority of candidates. The only occasional mistaken year was 1996. 'Barbecue' (with a range of spelling permutations) and 'automatic cleaning' were readily identified.

With d)(i) an exact explanation of what the 100 referred to ('property is 100 metres / yards from shops / supermarket') was required. Answers such as 'how far the supermarket is' or '100 metres of shops' were not sufficient.

All three elements of 'average summer temperature' were needed to score the mark in d)(ii). A number of candidates lost marks in question e) by misreading the question: they stated the sporting activities which could be practised in the region instead of the geographical features which such activities would require.

In question f)(i) more precision was required than 'three weeks in August'. Details that Víctor could only come in August and would prefer three weeks were also required.

Question f)(ii) generally posed few problems.

Most candidates were able to identify the idea of the educational benefits of travel in question g). Not so many managed to note the interaction with other cultures.

Question h) proved more of a challenge and usually only the more able candidates succeeded in getting both the marks.

### TAREA 4

In this task many candidates achieved good marks for communication. It was pleasing to see ingenuity used to resolve difficulties with vocabulary items or structures. It seems to have been clearly understood that this is transfer of meaning task and not translation.

Candidates who were later to prove in Task 7 that they did have competent writing skills quite frequently did not achieve here also.

Only a few candidates succeeded in writing the message consistently in the 'tú' or 'usted' form. (Either is acceptable in this exercise). There were a surprising number of problems in forming the future tense and also the present continuous. Pronouns after prepositions ('for us', 'for you') also caused difficulty. 'Encantaríamos' was commonly offered for 'we would love', 'lejo' appeared more abundantly than 'lejos', and 'somos interesantes' ('we are interested') also appeared. Incorrect language which presented a barrier to communication included the widespread use of 'datos' for 'fechas', 'ahorrar un espacio', and 'viejas en coche?' ('will you be travelling by car?').

### TAREA 5

This reading comprehension task was usually done well. Favourites among incorrect answers were **b** and **c**, and the correct answer **n** was often overlooked. Occasionally candidates did not give the required ten ticks or sometimes ticked eleven answers. (In this latter case a penalty of one mark was deducted).

## TAREA 6

This is one of the more challenging tasks in the new AS examination. The questions are intended to test not only candidates' reading comprehension but also their ability to manipulate language when writing their answers. The 'sympathetic native speaker' approach is adopted to assess understanding. If language interferes slightly but it is clear that the candidate has understood, then marks are awarded.

Candidates' marks for Accuracy were often similar, and even sometimes inferior, to those in Task 4. Unlike the freer style of writing in Task 7, the questions here require candidates to use structures which they might have preferred to avoid.

There were few problems with showing comprehension in a), although Javier commonly experienced a change of gender to '*una periodista*' or '*una coleccionista*'. More able candidates used verbs to describe the activities.

Question b) posed many linguistic challenges for candidates.

The answers to questions c) and d) generally showed good comprehension, in spite of the fact that construction of a past tense was not always accurate.

In question e) most candidates successfully noted that Javier was given the worst time slots for his programmes, but very few were able to state that this was because he refused to give publicity to certain singers.

Question f) was done well, but some candidates did not state that Javier and the musicians exchanged ideas and tricks of the trade.

Some candidates often confused answers to i) and j) with the income from the flamenco record frequently being the means by which Javier had paid for his house.

The final two questions were challenging and differentiated well. Only the better candidates were able to understand and successfully state Javier's views that he is in favour of the distribution of music on the Internet and that he considers that there are too many restrictions.

## TAREA 7

There is still scope for candidates to improve the techniques they use to complete this task. Question (a) requires a paraphrase of those parts of the stimulus text which answer the question. There is no need to attempt to interpret the text, draw conclusions or offer any personal opinions. For question (b) candidates are required to express as many relevant ideas and viewpoints as possible.

7(a) The stimulus text seemed to be accessible. Some candidates were able to identify all twelve points noted in the mark scheme about summer job opportunities.

7(b) The best responses to the question of whether it is worth doing a summer job came from those who considered both sides of the argument. Candidates who confined themselves to just the positives or just the negatives frequently ran out of ideas and repeated themselves.

A number of candidates interpreted the question as referring to a summer job abroad, which was acceptable as long as the ideas were relevant. Many candidates drew from their own experiences of part-time holiday work, which was again acceptable provided the response was relevant.

Arguments in favour of part-time summer work included:

- it was something to do in the long, boring holidays
- it brought in money which could be used for a variety of purposes and offered a degree of financial independence from parents
- it provided discipline and experience which would enhance future employment prospects and offered opportunities to acquire new skills and meet new people.

Negative viewpoints stressed that:

- you need to relax after the stressful academic year
- student employees are often exploited in terms of hours and pay
- employers can often be unpleasant
- summer work interferes with time spent with family and friends and makes it impossible to go on holiday.

The most common conclusion was that the best thing to do was to work for a few weeks, earn some money and then spend it on more pleasurable activities.

The technique required to achieve high marks in (b) is for candidates to generate as many relevant ideas and opinions as they can in response to the question and to develop these as far as is possible. Arguments do not need to be reinforced by statistics of dubious origin along the lines of '*En una encuesta reciente un 43.7% de jóvenes se declaró a favor de los empleos de verano*'. Also, although the point that summer employment might remove young people from the temptations of '*drogas*' or '*el botellón*' might be initially relevant, lengthy explanations of the evils of these practices is not.

## **7 Quality of Language**

Quality of language is assessed over both (a) and (b). As stated previously, in this task candidates have control over what they are going to say and the standard of writing was often noticeably better than that for Tasks 4 and 6.

In addition to a mark for accuracy, a mark is given for range of vocabulary and structure. It was pleasing to note many examples of candidates taking advantage of this opportunity to use items which, when used appropriately, fitted seamlessly into their writing and enhanced their work.

On the downside there were errors when candidates struggled to break free from the shackles of first language interference.

## F724: Spanish: Listening, Reading and Writing 2

### General Comments

There was a small entry this series, as expected. The Listening section was dealt with well, as also was most of the Reading section (with the notable exception of the transfer of meaning task). For the Essay section it was not clear that all candidates had understood what was required of them. Performance was disappointing. Some candidates were not well prepared, both in terms of quality of language and content. There were quite a few instances of pre-learned material, used regardless of relevance and with little or no effort made to adjust it to meet the requirements of the question answered. In terms of content, the other main concern was the distinct lack of specific detail or examples, most essays being too general, with inclusion of little information or statistics relating to Spain or Spanish-speaking America.

While appreciating that candidates, during their courses, probably produce much of their work on a computer, the examiners wished to ask Centres to ensure that candidates understand the importance of clear presentation, legible handwriting and, above all, thought and planning before committing pen to paper, so as to avoid arrows, asterisks and the like.

### Section A Listening

#### Task 1

This task requires answers in English. Candidates with the necessary vocabulary and the ability to write unambiguous English achieved good marks here. They needed to understand the recording, select the relevant information and express it appropriately.

- a) The word *bosque* and the numbers caused problems for some.
- b) Some candidates thought the land *was* used to feed the population.
- c) The key idea was that this was the *main cause* of exploitation of the land.
- d) Most candidates gave a satisfactory answer.
- e) The point was often missed that *the park* was specifically created to protect nature.
- f) Most candidates gave a satisfactory answer.
- g) The idea that a disaster *may* – not *will* – cause poverty was sometimes not seen
- h) The concept of *bienes* was rendered literally sometimes – as *goods* – which was not appropriate here.

#### Task 2

To answer well candidates needed to show comprehension, in clear and accurate Spanish. Some answers were designed to be answered by transcription, some required more input from the candidate and some were intended to allow candidates to show their ability to understand information and ideas which they then expressed in their own words.

A few candidates answered some questions in English.

- a) The phrase *a coordinar* caused problems to some candidates.
- b) The phrase *es de lo más fundamental* was misheard by some candidates.
- c) Some candidates thought 7 was a number of items, rather than a percentage. *Hacia* was rendered as *hacía* or *así a*.
- e) This question differentiated well.
- f) Candidates needed to make clear that people were presenting themselves for jobs.
- h) The best answers paraphrased the text from the recording; an average answer transcribed correctly chosen words; weaker answers transcribed too many words and so gave an incorrect answer.

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- i) The best candidates rendered the idea of *cuanto mejor sea el tratamiento...* in their own words; other candidates attempted – not always successfully – to transcribe the sentence.
- j) *Su vida* was taken as *subida* by some candidates.
- k) *Horario* was taken as *diario* by some candidates.
- l) Most candidates transcribed the text; more confident candidates rephrased it in simple but clear Spanish.
- m) Some candidates could not distinguish between what was needed, and what was not needed.
- l) Most candidates gave a satisfactory answer.

### Section B Reading

#### Tarea 3

The task required students to demonstrate comprehension of phrases in the context of the passage, by finding the exact equivalent of the words given in the questions. This was generally done well. In just a few cases, there was inclusion of *una* before *velocidad inaudita* in c). Some candidates added words that were not the exact equivalent; a certain number of candidates copied incorrectly when writing their answers.

#### Tarea 4

The task required comprehension of phrases in the context of the text and expression of that comprehension by completing a sentence with a verb. Verbal phrases were also accepted if they gave the correct meaning. However, to give clear answers candidates needed to know the forms of verbs. Many candidates found this a demanding exercise, and it differentiated well.

- a) *Será* was a common response and, to a lesser extent, *hará*.
- b) Difficulty was experienced in identifying an appropriate verb, some examples being *doble, crecerá, ha bajado, se mayora*.
- e) This was a challenge met only by the strongest candidates.
- f) Future of *querer* seemed to pose problems; where used, it tended to be in the present indicative or subjunctive (*quieren/ quieran*), but many candidates opted for an alternative (e.g. *desearán*).

### Tarea 5

This was answered well, except in a few cases where there was confusion over the first and fourth answers.

### Tarea 6

The task required comprehension, with manipulation of Spanish to give accurate answers. This was generally answered well.

- b) Some candidates wrote: *las ventanillas no trabajan*.
- c) It was not always understood that poor train service led to the son's absence from work.
- d) Some candidates did not express the causal link between poor rail service and low productivity.
- e) There was a lack of familiarity with the verb *reconstruir*, e.g. *reconstruccionan*, *reconstruictarán*.

### Task 7

The task requires transfer of meaning of the selected text. The outcome should be correct, idiomatic English which follows the full meaning of the original. It cannot be a literal, word for word translation; it is not possible simply to choose the word that has the same form in English; neither can it be an explanation of the text, with additions to the text which are not justified by the need for correct transfer of meaning. Where Spanish uses an article and English does not, this should be reflected in the answer. "Correct English" was taken to mean clear and unambiguous English.

This task was frequently not well done. Many candidates clearly needed more practice. Some renderings did not make sense in English. Candidates should not offer alternative renderings of a particular phrase.

There were difficulties with the following items:

|                        |                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| orquestas juveniles    | Rendered as juvenile orchestras |
| orgullo                | stars, symbol, voice            |
| existen desde          | the tense required in English   |
| desde que              | because                         |
| organismo              | organism                        |
| despertó la admiración | to wake up, or wrong tense      |
| además de              | more than, moreover             |
| placer                 | not known                       |
| arma                   | army, arm, armament             |
| oído                   | hate                            |

### Tarea 8

This task required candidates to explain in Spanish the meanings of certain phrases, in the context of the original text, without re-using directly any of the original key words. The original words can be adapted and basic words (e.g. articles) can, of course, be re-used. The outcome can be simple, correct Spanish, as long as it reflects the meaning of the original.

The performance was often fair to good. The idea of *pertenecer* in (a) was not appreciated by some, nor was the implication of *se propuso* in (b). With the exception of *pobreza* in (b), considerable effort was made to avoid re-using the words from the text and some good attempts were made in (d) (e.g. *conciertos/espectáculos bien recibidos/prestigiosos*).

### Tarea 9

Not all candidates took advantage of the help given in the rubric, which identifies the source of the answers, which closely follow the sentences of the relevant part of the text. Candidates here need to appreciate the meaning of the sentence stem and appreciate the syntactical requirements which follow on from the stem, so as to give an answer drawn from the text. This type of exercise frequently requires manipulation of the language.

Questions c) and e) often produced good, well expressed answers. In a) the stem was sometimes not read properly or was misunderstood, with an affirmative – as opposed to the required negative – response given. In b), there was frequent omission of reference to music.

### Tarea 10

This required comprehension and the ability to select the required information, which ideally was expressed in the candidate's own words. The task was often well done, however, questions a) and b) were sometimes misunderstood, saying that the young want to take drugs to escape reality or that they spend too much money in shopping centres. Some failed to answer g) correctly about Lerner's current profession.

In f) the question was misunderstood or not read properly, with answers referring to *confianza* or *clarinete*, while some of the good renderings displayed problems with word order, e.g. *habría vendidolo*.

### Section C Essay

Examiners rewarded essays which were informed, country-specific, structured pieces of writing that responded to the question. The best essays observed the recommended limit of 400 words and were clearly written to a plan. They had a precise introduction and conclusion; they provided country-specific evidence and used the evidence to support ideas. They told the reader something. They reached a conclusion that was more relevant than that, for example, of *el gobierno debería hacer algo sobre esto*. The level of knowledge was that of an informed person who had studied one of the sub-topics for a number of weeks, perhaps through a text book, or some newspaper articles, or relevant film or literature. They were a relevant response to the question, rather than based exclusively on a piece of work done previously in class; they related to the question title rather than the overall topic area. They used the candidates' own words; where the candidate borrowed words and phrases from texts studied, these were made the candidate's own; the use of set phrases (*la verdad lisa y llana es que...*; *esto es un tema que lleva años apareciendo/ saliendo en los medios*) was kept to a minimum.

The Topics for the essays were known in advance; there is a guarantee that there will be two essays on each of the four Topics. The range of sub-topics which may occur was also known in advance; in one case there are four sub-topics to a Topic, for the other Topics there are just three. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect candidates to have studied some of the sub-topics in order to demonstrate, in the essay, knowledge and understanding of the Topics as they apply to a Spanish-speaking country.

Generally speaking, the marks for structure and analysis (Grid O) were middling to top of the range. Essays that did not score high marks sometimes had over-lengthy introductions, while conclusions, where given, lacked substance or contained entirely new points. Ideas were not always in a logical sequence or appropriately linked and were often repetitive. Solutions or measures were mentioned but later not specified, e.g. in respect of unemployment, mention was made of *muchas medidas que los españoles pueden tomar para poner fin al desempleo*, but none were outlined.

## Report on the units taken in January 2010

Likewise, some sweeping statements were made (*Creo que el gobierno debería hacer más* or *El desempleo no va a empeorar*), with no basis offered to justify them and no corresponding arguments or explanations provided.

The marks were often lowest on the grid for relevant information from the country and for points of view (Grid N). There was a cap of 4 marks if there was no specific country-related example in the essay. Unfortunately, there were instances of what appeared to be pre-learned essays which ignored the question, there were essays which did not relate to the country and essays consisting of a large number of learned essay phrases which did not lend themselves to transmitting information.

The most popular topics were unemployment and pollution. In both, as in treatment of the other topics chosen, the inclusion of just one or two statistics or concrete details regarding the country in question seemed to be considered sufficient to give the impression that the whole text related to that country. However, frequently the information provided was so basic or general that it could have related to any part of the world, with terms such as *el gobierno* and *el país* particularly lacking in clarity, especially following references to, or comparisons with, the situation in the UK. In essays on unemployment there were some instances of as much as 50% of the content dealing with other social issues (namely immigration and the environment) rather than touching upon them briefly and adhering to specifics of the actual topic chosen. A further issue was a tendency to state the obvious (e.g. *Si no tienes dinero, no podrías comprar alimentos en el supermercado y no podrías comer*) combined with failure to assume that the essay is for an educated reader, leading to inclusion of redundant information such as a definition of unemployment or detailed accounts of the harmful effects of carbon dioxide. By contrast, some candidates made valid points and at the same time showed some imagination and originality, e.g. Question 12, where a candidate pointed out the difficulty of policing all the *costas* to prevent entry of drugs, in part on account of lack of resources; it was persuasive in tone.

The language in the essays was sometimes difficult to judge as in quite a few instances the essay was apparently pre-learned or had many set phrases. In respect of range, candidates should be advised not to choose a topic area unless they are entirely confident in their knowledge of the specific vocabulary involved, otherwise anglicisms or paraphrasing tend to abound. The range of errors included the usual areas of difficulty: *ser* and *estar*, genders, *gustar*, agreements and verb forms. A certain number of candidates regularly wrote the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the present tense ending in *-s*: *España tienes* etc.

# Grade Thresholds

AS GCE/Advanced GCE Spanish (H077 / H477)  
January 2010 Examination Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

| Unit |     | Maximum Mark | A   | B   | C  | D  | E  | U |
|------|-----|--------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|---|
| F721 | Raw | 60           | 46  | 41  | 36 | 31 | 27 | 0 |
|      | UMS | 60           | 48  | 42  | 36 | 30 | 24 | 0 |
| F722 | Raw | 140          | 115 | 104 | 93 | 82 | 71 | 0 |
|      | UMS | 140          | 112 | 98  | 84 | 70 | 56 | 0 |
| F724 | Raw | 140          | 108 | 95  | 82 | 69 | 56 | 0 |
|      | UMS | 140          | 112 | 98  | 84 | 70 | 56 | 0 |

## Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

|      | Maximum Mark | A   | B   | C   | D   | E   | U |
|------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| H077 | 200          | 160 | 140 | 120 | 100 | 80  | 0 |
| H477 | 400          | 320 | 280 | 240 | 200 | 160 | 0 |

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

|      | A     | B     | C     | D     | E     | U   | Total Number of Candidates |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|----------------------------|
| H077 | 23.94 | 57.75 | 84.51 | 91.55 | 97.18 | 100 | 143                        |
| H477 | n/a   | n/a   | n/a   | n/a   | n/a   | n/a | n/a                        |

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:  
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums/index.html>

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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