

OCR Report to Centres

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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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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F721/01, 02, 03 Speaking (AS)

General Comments

Overall performance of candidates was good. Centres were generally familiar with the format of the tests and most candidates were given ample opportunities to show what they knew and what they could do.

Option 01 is for mp3 files directly uploaded to the OCR Repository and option 02 is for centres sending a CD of the tests. The tests, headed working mark sheet and topic form for each candidate should be sent / uploaded for marking immediately upon completion.

To obtain good marks in the role play, candidates needed to be able to convey the information contained in the stimulus materials and to respond readily and appropriately to the examiner's questions to convince or persuade that a particular outcome is possible.

The opportunity was available for a more personal response in extension questions linked to the situation. It is important to remember that the exercise is not just a comprehension test and that interaction between examiner and candidate is essential to allow the role play to develop.

Candidates generally scored an adequate number of content points under Grid A of the mark scheme for "Use of stimulus", aided by the fact that they could reasonably relate to the subject matter of the scenarios. This was also evident in the way in which most candidates handled the follow-up questions where, for instance in Role Play B, they were able to analyse the differences between use of their own mobile and that of their parents and grandparents, for the most part clearly expressed and resorting to appropriate linking devices such as *además*, *por otra parte*, etc.

Candidates should start their part in the role play by asking two questions. Good performances manipulated appropriately the cues given on the stimulus sheet; there was again some inconsistency in the ability to ask these questions in a natural manner.

In the topic discussion, the extent of preparation and consequent varying degrees of success were more obvious. As in previous series, some candidates had undertaken extensive research, could actively engage in a lively discussion and were fired with enthusiasm about their chosen topic. Others were less well prepared, in that they relied on their general knowledge and so were limited in their approach, both in terms of content and development of ideas, as well as in structure and vocabulary.

Quality of language is assessed in both sections. Many candidates made a real attempt to use higher-level structures. Accuracy was rather mixed, with unexpected errors in simpler expressions. As previously, however, some candidates tended to embroider utterances unnecessarily with a number of all-purpose phrases.

Pronunciation and intonation were satisfactory. There was occasional difficulty with stress, and mispronunciation of certain sounds (mainly *d* between vowels and *ge/gi/j*).

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A (Role play)

Candidates should be given every opportunity to transmit the information given in the stimulus materials (Grid A of the mark scheme). They should also have opportunities to show initiative, persuade and explain (Grid B).

Many candidates entered the spirit of the role play, kept the tarea clearly in mind and gained credit accordingly. Most candidates used their preparation time well to think about the extension questions, though some candidates read out lengthy prepared statements. Most took the opportunity to demonstrate their range of structures and breadth of vocabulary, having been actively encouraged to incorporate in their answers a variety of tenses, examples of the subjunctive, a common instance being after *Es importante que....*, and conditional sentences with *si*.

Role play A

This was about a local health centre and how to use its various services. Candidates handled the essential information reasonably competently. Linguistically, there were opportunities for candidates to show correct use of *ser / estar* (for location) and times, as well as differences between *pedir / preguntar*. Some vocabulary difficulties were experienced with *appointment, temporary, staff* (confusion over *empleos* and *empleados*). Most candidates were able to give details of the opening times, though there was confusion over the use of *por / de* in time expressions.

There were some stress errors, notably in *emergencia, farmacia*.

Candidates provided a wide range of appropriate answers to the follow-up questions.

Role play B

This was an advertisement for a mobile phone. Candidates were very much at home with the subject matter. The task included opportunities for candidates to show familiarity with giving prices, using numbers and ordering / paying for the product.

Potential language challenges included: *screen* (though known by most), *any* (as in “any network”), *pounds* (confusion with *libros / libras / libres*), *next (-day)*, *delivery*. The ability to express numbers (200, 95, etc.) accurately was inconsistent.

The extension questions about the importance and use of mobile phones provided a range of answers, according to the ability of the candidates.

Role play C

The material included information about a railcard. Candidates generally managed to give details of the discounts the card offered and of the types of tickets available. Good responses managed to differentiate between the actual cost of the card (£28 pounds per year) and the minimum fare (£12) at certain times. Full responses also made the point that the all-inclusive travelcards were available for travellers from outside London. The various ways of obtaining the card were handled reasonably well, though some candidates struggled to paraphrase (or omitted altogether) that the card would be sent *postage free*, or that the cheaper, three-year card was only available online.

Linguistically, expressing numbers was a source of error for some candidates. In the first extension question, some candidates had difficulty in expressing activities in the past: confusion of *fui / fue* and consistency in use of the preterite.

Role play D

This was about options for broadband and telephone provision. The general subject matter caused few real problems for candidates, though some points of detail were overlooked or ambiguously conveyed. Good responses brought out the flexibility of the product, including contract length and combinations available. Candidates did not always appreciate, however, *from*, when prices were given or that the price promise referred to local competition. Prompting was sometimes needed to obtain details of the discount available for introducing another customer.

Numbers, including prices, varied in accuracy; *month* was not infrequently *mesa*. There were many ingenious ways of conveying the ideas of setting up or leaving the contract or service, mostly successfully.

The extension questions provided scope for a range of ideas and opinions.

Section B (Topic discussion)

Candidates were generally well prepared and usually had plenty of factual information. Since ideas and opinions are key criteria for marks in Grid D, most candidates expressed some points of view. There were very few instances of topics that strayed from the specification requirements, though a continuing problem was sometimes posed by the choice of the life and work of an individual, whether a sports personality, singer or artist, that tended to be of a purely biographical nature.

Most candidates had made a good effort to familiarise themselves with the vocabulary / terminology of their chosen topic and which in some cases was quite technical or specialised; several had clearly done a great deal of work gathering information on their topic, had analysed and had put it together in a structured manner, with sound logical arguments to back their opinions.

While it was important that candidates incorporate expressions of opinion, there was overuse, eg excessive inclusion of *a mi juicio / a mi modo de ver* and they were misapplied to actual facts or misused in conjunction with verbs such as *creer*, e.g. *en mi opinión yo creo...*

As in the role play, interaction with the examiner is important. Good performances included examples of fluent and spontaneous discussion. There were still, however, instances of mini presentations. All candidates should be given the opportunity to respond to the unexpected to gain access to the full range of marks in Grid E1.

Quality of language was generally at least competent. Many candidates made real efforts to extend the range of structure, though sometimes by the inclusion of unnatural, rather contrived prepared sentences.

There were many cases of accurate and varied language. Errors still tended to occur in basic language, with the perennial hurdle of verb endings, genders and agreements, use of *ser / estar* and *gustar*.

Many candidates had good or very good pronunciation. Intonation was variable in authenticity; errors in pronunciation, stress and intonation were prevalent when candidates recited prepared answers.

F722 Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments

The examination was pitched at an appropriate level, affording candidates ample opportunity to show how much progress they had made since GCSE. The stimulus texts, drawn from both Spanish and Latin American sources, proved to be accessible to most, and the tasks discriminated well between differing levels of ability. The AS topic areas of transport, education, daily life and living conditions in Spain, the influence of television, sport and food addictions were all explored, allowing candidates to draw from their familiarity with such subject matter. The paper posed challenges, which candidates invariably met in a positive manner.

Although the paper was of approximately the same overall difficulty as that of previous years, the distribution of challenge within the paper was different. For some candidates the early listening tasks proved to be a little more demanding, which was compensated elsewhere, especially by the accessible text which provided the basis for Task 7. Overall, the questions which were designed to discriminate between levels of ability worked well.

Candidates seemed to have been well advised on how best to manage their time allocation for this examination; there were very few who appeared to be rushed. On the few occasions when short questions were left unanswered it usually appeared to be an issue of inability to answer, or occasionally oversight, rather than lack of time.

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

Able candidates seized opportunities to add to their marks for quality of language in those questions designed for this purpose, with many aware of strategies for enhancing the quality of their written Spanish. At the top end the extended writing, despite errors, flowed quite naturally, and showed confident use of more complex structures and a range of vocabulary. Other candidates translated English structures and expressions literally into Spanish, and were reliant on phrases from the stimulus texts.

Candidates had generally been well prepared in the techniques required for the different sections of this examination. There were still a few, however (commonly from a bilingual background) who, after performing well in earlier parts of the paper, wrote little for Task 7b.

Most candidates displayed competence and confidence, and were able to record an accurate and creditable measure of the good level of progress they had made in Spanish. There were, however, a small number of candidates who were clearly yet not ready for an examination of this level.

Comments on Individual Questions

TAREA 1

This was a gap-fill exercise which produced a full range of marks. Many of the distracting words were quite tempting, and careful listening was required to tease out correct answers. The application of grammar rules (and indeed common sense) might have helped candidates to gain higher marks. Errors occurred in **(f)** and **(h)**, *comparable* being a popular choice of incorrect answer for the latter, and *entregas* was very generously bandied about, which suggested that many did not really know the word and its function. Most candidates managed to get **(b)** and **(j)** correct.

TAREA 2

This matching exercise was based on a PE teacher's account of his first day at work. Again a full range of marks was produced. Although there was no obvious pattern of correct answers and errors, most gave correct answers for **(i)** and **(j)**, but answered **(e)** incorrectly as 15 or were confused over the notion of formal dress and gave 19 instead of 9 for **(a)**.

TAREA 3

This task was based on four young people's opinions of life in Spain and it produced a full range of marks.

Although this is a test of listening comprehension of Spanish, precision in English is necessary in expressing the answers. Perhaps, the best advice to candidates is that they should attempt to write down exactly what they hear, and not attempt to interpret it. This can help to avoid instances where, despite there being some probability that the candidate has understood, lack of clarity of expression invalidates the answer. Candidates should be reminded not to offer alternative answers.

- (a)** The mark scheme was looking for an appreciation of the expression *cada vez más*. Answers which stated that the standard of living was 'high' or 'higher', and did not contain the element of 'improving' or 'increasing', did not score the mark.
- (b)** This three mark question which was generally done well, with most candidates scoring at least two marks. Problems were occasionally encountered in putting into adequate English *otros tienen que hacer un esfuerzo para llegar a final de mes*.
- (c)** Most candidates answered this question successfully, picking up on either the level of 'freedom' or 'respect' in Spanish society.
- (d)** There were two ways of scoring the mark here, either by stating that the family made enough money or by saying that they all worked.
- (e)** Provided that they recognised *gama*, which the majority did, this was another question on which many fared well. Some candidates were unsuccessful when they suggested a 'wide access to technology' rather than 'access to a wide range of technology'.
- (f)** Candidates who recognised *viviendas* invariably scored one of the two marks available for this question. However, this word was not universally recognised, sometimes being confused with *bebidas* or taken to mean *comestibles*. Only better candidates were able to go on and say that too many people were making a business out of whatever they thought that *viviendas* meant.

- (g) There were good marks for both parts of this question. With the few exceptions of candidates who failed to recognise *vecinos*, most were able to state that Spaniards (according to this text) have little to do with their neighbours. Many successfully contributed either or both of the additional elements required to score the second mark.
- (h) The text relevant to answering this question contained two words, *residen* and *asilos*, which, had they appeared in a reading comprehension, would have caused fewer problems for candidates than they appeared to do here. Only the more able candidates scored both marks.
- (i) This last question discriminated well, with better candidates recognising the meaning of both key words *sanitario* and *jubilados*.

TAREA 4

Responses to this transfer of meaning exercise seem to get better year on year, and there was an improvement in writing accurate, everyday Spanish. The necessary techniques of paraphrasing the meaning whenever literal translation is either inappropriate or unknown seem to have been well practised. Most candidates communicated to a degree the points of the message, and many high marks were scored. Typically the mark for quality of language was inferior to that for communication, but of the 20 marks available for this question, many were able to score 15 or more.

The message offered opportunities for candidates to show off their knowledge of informal Spanish in combination with the occasional more complex structure. The opening sentence was a good test of basic subjunctive knowledge which was handled well by better candidates. A larger than usual number realised it had to be a subjunctive but only about half of those eschewed *mover* for *mudarse* or *ir a vivir*. Many provided more literal versions such as *mis padres me quieren mover*.

After this first sentence, it was fairly plain sailing with perhaps fewer than usual grammatical problems to negotiate. However, what was required was a reasonable ability to cope with more informal language. "I'm really looking forward to it" produced a range of excellent attempts to convey the meaning, such as *tengo muchísimas ganas de ir*, *estoy muy emocionado*, or *me parece una idea brillante*. The question "What's life like...?" caused a few problems, with *¿Cómo es?* not being as widely known as might have been expected. The literal *¿Qué es la vida como...?* was not acceptable.

¿Cómo disfrutan? appeared to be quite widely known, although many chose to make this reflexive which, although inaccurate, was considered to communicate the meaning. Unlike *¿Qué hacen en su tiempo libre?*, which, although good for quality of language, was not thought to be close enough.

Only better candidates offered *he oído que* or *me han dicho que* for "I've heard that...", although incorrect versions such as *muchas personas hablan que* were still allowed for the communication point if the rest of the sentence was successful.

Most candidates successfully communicated the next two sentences, but "for an English speaker" and "best way" caused difficulties for some.

The last phrase "What does everybody think?" might well have been anticipated, as similar expressions have been used to end messages in previous papers. However, there were mismatches between *todos / los demás / ustedes / todo el mundo* and the appropriate verb. With this, and the other questions asked in the message, there was often a surprising reluctance to use correct Spanish punctuation *¿...?* Some candidates from a bilingual background who were able to express conversational phrases in good Spanish often lost marks because of inconsistent spelling, lack of grammatical awareness etc. e.g. *para ser amigos* for *para hacer amigos*.

TAREA 5

The matching task based on the text about Latin American 'soaps' proved to be accessible to the vast majority of candidates and good marks were commonly scored. The less familiar word *tamaño* at the start of two separate questions (**n**) and (**p**) may have been responsible for a number of wrong answers. The most commonly omitted answer was (**q**) and the most common wrong answer was (**g**).

TAREA 6

The general gist of the text about the achievements and goals of a disabled sportsman appeared to be grasped by all. Some of the finer points, however, caused problems. Most candidates attempted every answer and most tried to do so in their own words, or understood the need for manipulation of language or to use a verb in the correct tense.

Although this is generally a short answer exercise it was pleasing to note successful and appropriate attempts at including more complex structures and vocabulary, for example: *Es importante que se haga deporte para ganar movilidad / Los discapacitados van allí para que puedan practicar actividades / Ejercía como profesor de matemáticas / Se dedicaba a hacer deportes de riesgo.*

As a general policy, candidates should be encouraged to take on board the notion that they should read every question closely, before answering it with the natural response, (for example, *profesor* is not a natural response to *¿Qué hacía cada día en las clases?*).

- (a) Comprehension was not a problem. The question *¿Qué hacía... cada día...?* was intended to trigger an imperfect verb for the response.
- (b) *Los deportes extremos* was a perfectly good natural response to this question.
- (c) Many candidates answered well, with expressions such as *tuvo un accidente*. A common unacceptable answer was *se estrellaron contra el suelo*, which illustrated more clearly the way in which some candidates tend to rely on the source material. Amongst candidates from a bilingual background *calló* was a frequent misspelling of *cayó* which, depending on what else was written, usually invalidated the answer.
- (d) In this exercise it is important to remember that the questions will always follow the same sequence as the text and the answer here is to be found in the opening sentence of the second paragraph. What *Agustín* found difficult when he left hospital was *andar* or *usar las piernas*.
- (e) Most candidates were able to communicate at least one of the two answers sought here, typically *para ganar movilidad*. Attempts to manipulate *deprimirse* for the second point were not always so successful.
- (f) Nearly everybody was able to show that they had understood that *Agustín* had taken up cycling. The significance of *retomar* was missed by some.
- (g) Almost every candidate correctly identified *adaptada* as being the key to this answer. Some went astray by writing that *Agustín* needed to adapt himself to the bicycle, rather than vice versa.
- (h) Both this and the following question tested comprehension well, and could be answered perfectly naturally with a single word. Those who were uncertain often incorrectly relied on the words from the text with *le pasaron todos*. Others invalidated answers by offering *final*.

- (i) As above, the single word *primero* was all that was needed. A number of candidates scored the mark for communication but disappointingly wrote *en el primero lugar*.
- (j) Many candidates focused correctly on the penultimate paragraph in the text for their answers, scoring at least one mark on this two mark question. The inversion in the text of *su mayor reto lo vivirá dentro de unos meses* clearly puzzled a few.
- (k) Here it was important for candidates to show that they fully appreciated the force of the question *¿Para qué van ...?* Many appeared to read it as *¿Por qué van...?*
- (l) This final question was a good discriminator, with only the better candidates scoring both marks for identifying the family as the enemy, because they tend to over-protect the disabled person. Answers such as *la familia es sobreprotegida* did not communicate the correct information.

TAREA 7

Most candidates seemed to have been well prepared for this part of the exam, which carries over one third of the total marks. However, there were still a very few candidates, often from a bilingual background, who wrote a brief, very generalised précis for part (a), rather than pick out the specific details from the text which score the marks, and who sometimes included a personal comment. There were also a few candidates who appeared to devote too much time and energy to (a), at the expense of (b).

7(a)

Candidates showed excellent comprehension of the stimulus text, which was of an appropriate linguistic level and had a theme which was clearly of interest to them. High marks were often scored and, linguistically, there was solid evidence of an ability to cope with indirect speech, (*Lorena dice que... / El psicólogo recomienda que...*), and also of candidates using their own words and not being too heavily dependent on those of the text.

The details of *Lorena's* letter were noted successfully, with most candidates communicating at least two out of the three points. Confusion between *sentirse* and *sentarse* was viewed sympathetically as far as comprehension was concerned.

The mark scheme contained another nine points which could have been noted from the psychologist's response and candidates were successful with many of these. Most noted that chocolate consumption was not a bad thing in moderation, and many were successful in stating the medicinal value which is attached to it in Scandinavian countries. A mark was sometimes missed by not mentioning that it is milk chocolate which contains saturated fats, although the outcomes of excessive consumption were almost universally stated. More difficulty was encountered in noting that *Lorena* should continue to eat chocolate in moderation, provided that she was not experiencing any ill effects. Care was needed not to confuse *alergias* with *alegrías*. The notion of cutting down on chocolate consumption was well documented, but the advice that *Lorena* should reward herself at appropriate moments was successfully recorded by only a small number of candidates.

Nearly every candidate identified the final point that if *Lorena* could not keep to this advice she should see a professional.

Simple verb manipulation from 1st or 2nd to 3rd person was achieved by many candidates, although first language influence was evident among some candidates, (*Lorena tiene una chocolate problema... / ...buena calidad chocolate*).

7(b)

Candidates who planned their answer, however briefly, were often able to express a variety of points of view from different angles. All were able to tackle the subject matter with some degree of knowledge and opinion and most seemed to be able to structure their ideas very effectively into various categories of products, not only the more obvious drugs, tobacco and alcohol, but also including comments on chocolate (obviously) and other foods which could endanger health, video games and any other activity involving compulsive behaviour. There was a good range of opinions and candidates of all levels of linguistic competence were able to give answers that showed a personal appreciation of the question.

Candidates clearly felt comfortable with vocabulary and constructions, some perhaps drawing on material from previously written essays on drugs, obesity or *botellón* topics.

However, too much inclusion of pre-learnt material or phrases did not always enhance an answer. Several candidates from a bilingual background just wrote in a stream of ideas and showed a lack of understanding of the need to use a variety of structures.

A common pattern which emerged among the candidates' responses was a differentiation between 'good' addictions and 'bad' addictions. Products which might be responsible for 'good' addictions, such as chocolate, mobile phones, television, gymnasia or even books, did not need to be banned, provided that a balance was maintained and that they were used in moderation. Products responsible for 'bad' addictions, (almost universally tobacco, alcohol, and drugs), which had serious consequences for the individual, families and society, should be banned or at the very least made much more difficult to acquire. There were some arguments in favour of the stress-relieving qualities or medicinal values of this latter category.

The common conclusion was that any such ban would be nigh on impossible to implement, and would merely encourage a flourishing black market. There was also the point of view that it should be the decision of the individual whether or not to consume such products, and that governments should not dictate to them. (Candidates should be reminded that, if their conclusion is going to repeat opinions which have already been given in the body of the response, they should be as brief as possible, as no extra marks for content will be given for a repeated point of view).

Differentiation by language skills occurred with the twenty marks available for quality of written language, which was assessed for accuracy and range over both 7(a) and 7(b).

As ever, many candidates would benefit from reading through both answers at the end of the examination to eliminate avoidable errors.

There were outstanding examples of effective, accurate language which showed a clear ability to use a wide range of structures and vocabulary. Gems such as, *por esto sería una violación de los derechos humanos prohibir estos productos porque cada individuo puede escoger lo que quiere hacer con su propio cuerpo* were a pleasure to encounter.

This year's extended writing exercise worked well, with candidates from across the ability range seizing the opportunity to show off the levels that they had attained in this particular skill.

F723/01, 02, 03 Speaking (A2)

General Comments

The efficient approach to this examination is now well established in most centres entering candidates for this unit. There is a clear understanding of the demands of the A2 Speaking Test, both in terms of candidate performance and, indeed, the performance of teacher/examiners. This is not a straightforward exercise for teachers and it is very much appreciated that the majority of centres fully comply with the regulations and the rubric of the actual examination itself. This level of professional competence inevitably leads to candidates feeling more relaxed and at ease with the pressure involved in an oral test.

As with last year, all centres complied with the requirement to record the tests digitally on to CD or via the OCR Repository. Occasionally, a small numbers of centres experienced technical difficulties with transfers onto CD. A number of recordings were not clear in terms of quality, either because of microphone problems or extraneous noise in corridors and the like. It is, obviously, difficult to assess candidates when their responses are distant, muffled or partially drowned out by noises off. It would appear that many centres are now using small, mp3 recorders for these tests and the end results are encouragingly good.

The standards achieved by the cohort this year were similar to that of last year. There is little doubt that in Section A there continues to be good understanding of the notion that that lifting from the text is unlikely to score well in Grid K. Candidates are being assessed on their response to, and understanding of, the text. There is no way an examiner can be sure that full understanding has occurred if the candidate simply repeats lines from the text. With the questions on the theme of the text, it is similarly important that candidates show understanding of the questions asked and are able to respond to them in a way that shows their ability to develop ideas and take the initiative.

In Section B, the majority of candidates performed in line with their ability. This section of the test is a real opportunity for candidates to show off their research skills and present opinions, facts, statistics (if appropriate), detail and knowledge as well as an ability to develop their thoughts in response to questions asked on their chosen topic by the teacher/examiner. An overly prepared sequence of mini presentations in response to pre-learnt questions from the teacher/examiner will absolutely **not** be enough to get through the second section of the test. If candidates consult the mark scheme, they will see very clearly that spontaneity is crucial in this section of the A2 oral test.

There were fewer examples this year of topics being selected by candidates that are more in line with AS Specification. Some candidates opted to discuss a topic with reference to a play or a film (*Euthanasia* and *Mar Adentro* are good examples) but ended up spending an inordinate amount of time discussing the plot or the development of characters instead of considering the impacts and the influences that such works have had on the A2 topic under discussion. Candidates would do well to avoid such an approach given that fewer marks are available if they choose not to. It is also worth noting, again, that references to historical detail (e.g. Life in Spain under Franco) are perfectly acceptable in order to set a context but must link to the A2 under discussion, not overwhelm it. Similarly, in cases where candidates discuss a topic but with no specific references to contemporary Spanish/Latin American society, marks will be lost in Grid M (Development of Ideas). It was mentioned in last year's report but it is worth repeating yet again that the FAQs on the OCR website relating to this unit are well worth reviewing in preparation for next year's A2 Speaking Test and, in particular, the choice of topic for discussion.

There were few problems in terms of the administrative requirements for this test.

As a useful checklist, however, it is worth noting the following before the centre sends the script parcel to the examiner/uploads recordings onto the Repository:

- *Each recording of each test for each candidate must have **two** accompanying documents: **the Working Mark Sheet (WMS)**, duly filled in with the candidate's details, and **the Oral Topic Sheet (Form OTF)** with a list of **two** possible topics for discussion.*
- *It is also important for the centre to make sure that the attendance register is sent to the appointed examiner.*

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Texts A, B and C

Texto A (Los nuevos pobres de España), Texto B (La mujer y el alcohol) and Texto C (La conservación a nivel local en México) offered the majority of candidates plenty of opportunities for a mature conversation with the teacher/examiner. Centres clearly understood the need to avoid giving a candidate a text to work on that clashes with their chosen Section B topic.

Many candidates were able to respond thoughtfully and articulately to the questions asked on the themes of the text. There were few cases of candidates hesitating unduly or asking for questions to be repeated on a regular basis. As was stated last year, however, it is worth pointing out here that there is no penalty for candidates who ask for a question to be repeated, provided this does not happen with every question asked.

In terms of the language used, all three texts were equally accessible and most candidates dealt well with the inevitable complexities involved in such immediate textual analysis. There were few common misinterpretations of any of the texts although in *Texto A*, some candidates answered question 2 (*Según el segundo párrafo, ¿qué hizo Cáritas y por qué?*) by giving responses related to the charitable help and support offered by the organization to the unemployed rather than by reference to the *retrato típico* put together to illustrate the extent of the problem in the eyes of the organization.

Other than this, the texts served their purpose well and the response from candidates was positive.

General Conversation

Many candidates performed well in this section, especially in Grid M, given that they had obviously researched their selected topic/s very thoroughly indeed. There are, self-evidently, some very robust research skills amongst MFL Advanced level candidates sitting this unit. The majority of topics were appropriate and complied 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 the familiar ones.

The incorrect use of the verb *gustar* in sentences such as *...a las mujeres les gustan beber vino...* [sic.] and *los desempleados no se gusta pasar todo el día en casa...* [sic.] was not uncommon, even amongst the more able candidates. The ability to ensure that adjectives agree with their nouns also continues to catch many candidates out, as does the correct application of the rules regarding the passive voice and its avoidance. Too many candidates opt to employ the verb *estar* instead of *ser* and only the most able manage to ensure that the ensuing participles actually agree. Nevertheless, the correct use of the subjunctive in subordinate clauses continues to be a genuine strength for many candidates. Disappointingly, however, there were incorrect genders and incorrect intonation. The rising intonation at the end of normal statements appears to be making something of a comeback, albeit regrettably.

The majority of candidates were able to employ a wide range of tenses with consistent accuracy. Phrases introducing personal opinions such as *según mis investigaciones* and *hablando personalmente* were used in such a way as to give the conversation a very natural feel. In general terms, therefore, the overall standard of spoken Spanish was good.

F724 Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments

This series the examination paper provided ample opportunity for candidates to show the range of their language competence in Spanish. On the whole, compared to last year, candidates showed a better understanding of the requirements of the paper, although there were some candidates who would probably have benefitted from more preparation in exam technique, particularly with regard to the synonym exercise and the transfer of meaning. A few candidates treated the essay question as a general essay and relied on - at best - rather vague general knowledge; on the other hand there were essays which were well informed, well argued and a pleasure to read.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Listening and Writing

TASK 1

This exercise was generally well done, although some candidates had problems expressing themselves in clear, unambiguous English:

- (a) Most answers included the point that a woman was President but very few spotted that it was an association specifically for business women in transport.
- (b) Well answered in general. Some candidates decided to add that they were taxis only for female customers.
- (c) Most answered well. Almost all spotted that the answer was to do with women and public transport, although not all saw the aim as increasing women's use of public transport and not all stated this would be achieved by reducing women's apprehension.
- (d) Generally well done.
- (e) Many answers expressed the right idea although many chose to compare men and women as drivers.
- (f) Many had both ideas, that women will be freer at that time because school terms will have started. Some misinterpreted *asistir* along the lines of *helping*; some missed the point about schools re-opening for the children to study.
- (g) Most answers were fine, although some answers included reference to domestic violence.
- (h) A challenging question which was not done well with cumbersome transcriptions which did not answer the question.

TAREA 2

There were a few answers to this task in English instead of Spanish.

- (a) Most expressed adequately the idea of using a public bicycle or renting one. Some used *prestar* incorrectly here. In terms of accuracy many candidates used *el* for *bicicleta*.

- (b) Well answered in general. Some confused *dependencia* and *independencia* in their answers; the verb *ahorrar* was challenging to some.
- (c) There were few problems with this question about sending a text message, although some candidates sometimes wrote of receiving a message or incorrectly stated that the phone message was free of charge.
- (d) Mainly well done although *recoger* was often misspelt. Most avoided transcription of nouns from the recording, which did not answer the question.
- (e) Generally well done with times clearly referred to, although some answers provided the wrong year for 2007, or used the wrong tenses. Almost all candidates coped with the change from first-person to third-person verbs.
- (f) Generally well answered although some answers only transcribed *gente que ha utilizado una de nuestras bicicletas* without adapting the information as required for the question that was being asked.
- (g) This was a challenging question, answered correctly by a fair number of candidates. Others compared users to population without stipulating the small number of users or stated that the number of users had fallen.
- (h) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (i) Many had the idea of virtually no users for the system, or that the number of users fell drastically. *Zero* was a frequent misspelling.
- (j) This was well answered in general, although there was some confusion regarding the numbers, e.g. 100 bicycles were stolen, or 8 from each station.
- (k) A challenging question, answered well by many with a simple answer such as *Hay más parques* or *hay más zonas verdes*. Some transcriptions were too close to the text of the recording to answer the question.
- (l) There were some good answers related to climate and in the candidates' own words but many tried to transcribe what they heard in varied ways, sometimes incorrectly with *soporta* (rather than *apenas aporta...*).
- (m) This turned out to be a challenging question. Many had the idea of more houses being built, although some seemed to take *viviendas* as referring to the number of people living there. Fewer were able to link the swimming pools to the increased housing, simply stating that there were a lot of pools.
- (n) Many managed to express the idea even if rather clumsily. Direct transcription tended not to answer the question.
- (o) To answer this challenging question well, candidates needed to notice that the question was about the chemicals and clarify their source and their effect on the use of the water.
- (p) Only the best candidates explained clearly that there will be enough water to drink in the foreseeable future in Ciudad Real.

Section B: Reading and Writing

TAREA 3

- (a) (i) Only the best candidates identified the last areas to be linked by good communications as *remotas* or *rurales*, which was the implication of the text.
- (ii) Generally good answers.
- (iii) Generally good answers, although some saw the connections with hospitals as the result rather than the means.
- (iv) Generally good answers, with most candidates finding an appropriate verb related to *detección* in the article.
- (b) This was often well answered, but some used *aportar* without the right object and there was confusion with the use of words such as *la cuesta* and *fundar*.
- (c) This was generally well done.
- (d) This was a challenging question. The strongest candidates identified without difficulty that, before doing their work at the ground stations, the engineers would be trained, with some of them possibly going to China for that purpose.
- (e) The question asked candidates to state what certain countries had done, which was to acquire their own satellites.
- (f) There were many good answers, expressed in a variety of ways which avoided misleading copying from the article.

TAREA 4

This was a good comprehension exercise which also allowed candidates to show the quality of their grammatical knowledge.

- (a) Probably half of the candidates identified the key idea that the Bolivian government *signed* the agreement; the second gap was correctly filled by most candidates.
- (b) Many answers were correct; the most common error was to use an active verb inappropriately.
- (c) This was generally well answered in a variety of tenses.
- (d) This was a challenging question for some candidates who did not appreciate the grammatical requirements of the sentence.
- (e) This was generally well answered, although verbs did not always agree with their subject and irregular verbs forms were not always known.

TAREA 5

This exercise was not done as well as in previous series. Frequently candidates included too many or too few words in their answers, although they had spotted the relevant phrases. Items (b) and (c) were sometimes not correctly identified.

TAREA 6

Only the best candidates achieved full marks on this exercise of matching beginnings and endings of sentences.

TAREA 7

The task was split into five phrases of varying levels of difficulty. If an answer was true to the meaning of the original, and was in sufficiently authentic English as to be unambiguous, it was accepted. Good answers came from candidates with sufficient comprehension skills to understand the original and who had practised the techniques of transferring meaning. There were many examples of complete and effortlessly elegant English responses. The most challenging phrase was *los estudiantes vieron reforzado su movimiento*, which was acceptably rendered by a fair number of candidates, some of whom curiously were then unable to turn *las clases medias* into *the middle classes*, opting instead for *average classes*, *half classes* or *media studies classes*. Best answers came from candidates with the confidence to avoid the obvious word when moving between the languages, e.g. *protesta nocturna* as *protest at night* or *night-time protest*, rather than the strange *nocturnal protest* or *la juventud* as *young people* rather than the misleading *the youth*. It was surprising that some candidates appeared not to be familiar with the word *huelga*.

TAREA 8

Answers to these questions were generally good, with most candidates seeing the syntactical requirements of each of the stems.

- (a) Well answered even if the necessary subjunctive was not always evident.
- (b) Most answers correctly focused on the secondary students.
- (c) Good answers referred to the teachers' participation alongside their students.
- (d) This was a more challenging question, as it required candidates to understand and express the idea of resisting the police action.
- (e) There were good answers, usually using the verb *interrumpir*; the best answers did not just copy *interrumpida* (sic) from the text to apply it to *el tráfico* in the answer.

TAREA 9

There was a varied response to this task. A certain number of candidates used the words to be explained as part of the answer, in particular *ley* (b), *educación* (c) and *universitario* (d).

- (a) Only a minority achieved the full explanation of *un día de mucha violencia*.
- (b) The idea of *desarmados* was generally explained well; the idea of escaping from the police or the authorities, less so.
- (c) Generally well answered, although some answers linked *gratuidad* with *gracias* rather than *gratis*.
- (d) Often well expressed, although some candidates appeared to confuse *universitario* with *universal*.

TAREA 10

- (a) This was generally answered well, although there were sometimes problems with agreements or verb forms.
- (b) Most candidates answered this correctly.
- (c) Many candidates had the converse of what was required.
- (d) Most candidates answered this correctly.
- (e) Many candidates answered this well, although some did not include the idea of her as a leader in this context, preferring to copy other comments from the text about her general status in Chile.
- (f) Stronger candidates realised that this question was about her father and answered well, usually by saying that his daughter received death threats recently on social web sites.
- (g) This was often answered well.
- (h) Many answers referred to the present, rather than going back to what was established thirty years ago.
- (i) This task proved to be challenging; answers which used the word *igual* were often ambiguous; *igualdad* was not always given correctly. Some answered with the word *desigualdad*.

Section C: Writing

Questions 11–18

All the essay questions were answered and there were good answers to all of them. The most popular questions, however, were 11 (unemployment), inevitably given media coverage in the last few years, and 13 (energy), unsurprisingly given the general popularity of environmental issues.

Generally speaking, candidates had the language skills necessary to write an appropriate length of essay, although in some cases there appeared to be reliance on pre-learned phrases which sometimes did little to convey the meaning clearly. In terms of issues of accuracy, centres will be well aware of the range of issues which can affect candidates' performance.

With regard to content, essays varied a great deal. Some essays had many relevant examples referring to specific material from Spain or Spanish-speaking America, put together with a logical sequence and argument, whereas others had no reference to Spain at all, or relied on highly questionable information and supposed statistics.

The even-numbered questions all required a degree of imagination; some candidates responded well to that requirement, whereas others appeared to ignore it, which made it difficult to award high marks on the first two assessment grids.

In overall terms, the best essays were those where the candidate had clearly read the question and filtered his/her knowledge to suit. However, on many occasions, it seemed that the candidate saw only the general sub-topic area in the question heading and wrote to that. So, for example, in answer to question 13, many candidates were able to give a good description of non-renewable energies, but fewer argued their case to answer the question. In the case of

question 11, there was good insight into the situation in Spain regarding unemployment and its causes; however some candidates related that situation without answering the question whether unemployment is a threat to Spanish society. The resulting essays were descriptive and lacked depth.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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