

## **GCSE**

### **Spanish**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J732**

General Certificate of Secondary Education  
(Short Course) **J032 J132**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2014**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS / A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching / training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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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**Spanish (J732)**

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## Unit A721 Listening

### General Comments

We are grateful to centres for their work in preparing candidates for this unit. It is pleasing to report very minimal numbers of rubric errors or unanswered questions. In general candidates appeared to have been appropriately entered at Foundation Tier, with very small numbers of candidates scoring full or near full marks. At Higher Tier all but a very small number of candidates achieved a grade, which similarly indicates appropriate decisions made by teachers with regard to tier of entry.

As indicated in previous reports to Centres, the current GCSE specification and the design of this paper require the inclusion in the papers of some elements of unfamiliar vocabulary not listed on the defined vocabulary content list published by OCR. Answers do not generally depend on knowledge of this vocabulary, apart from at the higher end of the Higher Tier paper. Centres may find it useful to draw future candidates' attention to this point.

Candidates wrote clearly. We are grateful to Centres for continuing to train candidates to cross out any notes or discarded answers carefully so as to avoid accidentally invalidating otherwise correct responses.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Foundation Tier A721/01

- Ex 1** This exercise targeted Grade G. All questions were answered well, with only Question 5 causing occasional difficulty to a few candidates.
- Ex 2** This exercise targeted Grade F. Most candidates answered well and scored full marks. Question 12 caused the most difficulty and weaker candidates made lots of guesses. This serves as a reminder to Centres that it is important not to neglect basic items of vocabulary during revision and preparation for the examination, nor to narrow teaching through over-focus on the topics typically covered for controlled assessment.
- Ex 3** This exercise targeted Grade E. Most candidates continued answering well. Questions 16 and 22 were the most challenging overall. Similarly, in Question 22 the requirement to begin to process longer units of language, rather than individual items of vocabulary, differentiated effectively.
- Ex 4** This exercise targeted Grade D and, as part of the paper design, the level of demand increased. Candidates were required to process longer text, and very often the answers were in the middle of a unit of language rather than at the beginning or end. The vocabulary was not complex but the conceptual level had increased, and the topic of work and leisure was more demanding. As a consequence this exercise differentiated very effectively at and above its intended design grade. Question 25 in particular challenged all but the most able candidates and was the least well answered question in this exercise, probably because of the requirement in its second part to understand the reciprocal nature of the help young people gave each other.
- Ex 5** This exercise targeted Grade C. It was successful in differentiating at this level, and candidate performance declined fairly steadily through the exercise, with Question 29 being the most frequently incorrectly answered, despite many of the other options having been used up by this stage.

## Higher Tier A721/02

- Ex 1** This exercise targeted Grade D and was well answered by the majority of Higher Tier candidates. Question 3(b) proved the most challenging. The pattern of responses was noticeably better than those of Foundation Tier candidates on the equivalent exercise.
- Ex 2** This exercise targeted Grade C and required candidates to process more language and understand gist as well as detail. As part of the pattern of differentiation design, the conceptual level of demand rose and the exercise began to deal with feelings and points of view, which are part of the grade description for Grade C. As at Foundation Tier, it was Question 7 that caused the most difficulty, and the comments about Ex 5 in Foundation Tier also apply to here.
- Ex 3** This exercise targeted at Grade B. It was well answered by the majority of candidates and there was no particular pattern of incorrect answers.
- Ex 4** This exercise targeted Grade A. As is to be expected, the level of demand in both vocabulary and linguistic processing rose to match the requirements of the published grade descriptor for Grade A. Candidates had to deal with different time-frames as well as more demanding topic material and points of view. They also had to draw inferences, reach conclusions and deal with an element of distraction and overlap in some of the question items, techniques designed to test precise understanding. The most demanding questions were Question 12(a) and Question 14(b) which was answered correctly by only a very small number of the most able candidates. This exercise differentiated very effectively at its projected grade.
- Ex 5** This exercise targeted Grade A\* and, as is to be expected, challenged all but the most able candidates. Question 20 proved to be the most challenging, and candidates guessed at 'work-experience', rather than understanding the notion of forging links with businesses. Question 21, however, was well answered; candidates scored a mark having correctly understood the concept of 'unskilled work' from what they had heard. This exercise was highly effective in enabling differentiation at the top end of the candidature.

## Unit A722 Speaking

Some Centres conducted tests of a pleasing standard, giving candidates the opportunity to showcase what they knew and could do, and eliciting individualised performances. In the best cases Centres conducted clearly recorded tests and their candidates were easily identifiable. The marking criteria had been thoughtfully and fairly applied and, where necessary, internal moderation had taken place. Documentation and recordings were uploaded to the Repository or sent to the moderator promptly, and any requests for further samples or corrections to clerical errors were acted upon in good time.

Centres are reminded of the need to send to the moderator the GCW 937 forms (Student's Notes Forms) for **both** Task 1 and Task 2. Full guidance on what, how and when things need to be submitted is given in the Guide to Controlled Assessment in GCSE Modern Foreign Languages – Speaking. This publication can be accessed by following the link:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/73017-guide-to-controlled-assessment-speaking.pdf>

Teacher/Examiners are requested to check OCR instructions carefully, as omissions and problems can delay the moderators' work, which in turn may delay the publication of candidates' results.

The preferred task types were once again those of Presentation and Discussion; Conversation and Interview. Most Centres selected topic areas such as Self and Family, School, Work Experience, Holidays, Local Area or Free Time.

Teacher/Examiners are reminded that the tasks must not be monologues. A balance must be struck between the candidate being allowed sufficient opportunity to speak and the need for interaction and exchanges between the Teacher/Examiner and the candidate. Some presentations were very long and did not allow sufficient time for a decent discussion to follow. This meant that those candidates could not access the full range of marks because they had lost the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to respond spontaneously, to engage in exchanges with their interlocutor and to deal with unpredictable elements. This is inevitable when a candidate speaks uninterrupted for long periods.

All topics work best when Teacher/Examiners vary their approach and differentiate according to the ability of the candidate. The same standardised task and approach rarely elicits the best performance across the whole ability range. Similarly, the use of the same questions for every candidate will tend to discourage individuality and personal expression, particularly if this has not been encouraged in class. Some centres appeared to operate a 'template' type approach, such that candidates were asked the same questions and produced identical material when speaking freely. Such an approach obviously leads the moderator to query the degree of unpredictability in the test and is therefore unlikely to lead to the full range of marks being accessible.

In terms of the Communication mark, Centres are reminded that the mark should be based on the amount of information and the number of ideas successfully conveyed by the candidate. It should also take into account hesitation and ambiguity, and should reflect how much the candidate elaborated on their answers and whether or not they needed questions repeated or rephrased. Material supplied by the Teacher/Examiner is not rewarded, so caution is advised in the questioning of candidates. 'Closed' questions are of little value unless the Teacher/Examiner is simply using an easy question to re-establish the confidence of a struggling candidate and assist them to continue. The Teacher/Examiner should give more able candidates the opportunity to show their interactive skills by testing them with challenging questions, designed to stretch them by prompting further detail, clarification and examples. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their ideas and to produce longer strings of communication. In the case

of those candidates not expected to achieve the highest marks, opinions and reasons should nevertheless be sought in order to elicit a more personalised account.

In terms of Quality of Language, high marks can be achieved by capable candidates if they are encouraged to demonstrate their ability by using more complex structures and a wider range of vocabulary. Individual accounts are always more impressive than those generated by a 'template' approach, and Teacher/Examiners must be careful not to award a high Quality of Language mark to language which, though virtually error-free, is in fact very simple. This cannot be justified because the higher ranges of the marking criteria are for the successful use of more ambitious structures and vocabulary. Moderators this year found that Teacher/Examiners were sometimes inappropriately awarding marks from the 7 - 8 band, for example, when the test did not stray beyond the commonplace or when the candidate's attempts to include more complex language features were consistently executed without success.

Although pronunciation tended to be at least fairly good in most Centres, with marks of 4 and 3 commonly achieved, for some candidates poor pronunciation seriously hindered comprehension, and this necessarily affected their overall mark. In these cases there was much interference from English, and vowels in particular were unclear. Of the consonants, the most common difficulty for candidates is the /X/, as in *trabajo* or *geografía*. In the latter word, /dʒ/ was the common erroneous substitute. Stress patterns on individual words were problematic in many cases, and Teacher/Examiners need to alert candidates to the ambiguity caused, for example, when some Future or Preterite Tense verb forms are incorrectly stressed.

A small number of centres submitted inadequate recordings. Mostly the problem was caused by the tests being recorded at a very low volume such that the recording was virtually inaudible. In other cases the tests, when uploaded to the OCR Repository, had been curtailed and so the whole recording was not available to the moderator and a replacement had to be sought. Regrettably, Moderators must again repeat their plea for Teacher/Examiners to eliminate or at least reduce the effects of extraneous noises, for example, the shuffling of papers near sensitive microphones or the movement of pupils along adjoining corridors.

Centres are reminded that they will receive a report on their submission, prepared by the Moderator who assessed their speaking tests. Where appropriate, moderators will offer guidance to assist Teacher/Examiners to elicit improved performances from their candidates so that they can access higher marks.

## Unit A723 Reading

### General Comments

We are grateful to centres for their work in preparing candidates for this unit. It is pleasing to report very minimal numbers of rubric errors or unanswered questions. In general candidates appeared to have been appropriately entered at Foundation Tier, with very small numbers of candidates scoring full or near full marks. At Higher Tier all but a very small number of candidates were achieved a grade, which similarly indicates appropriate decisions made by teachers with regard to tier of entry.

As indicated in previous reports to centres, the current GCSE specification and the design of this paper require the inclusion in the papers of some elements of unfamiliar vocabulary not listed on the defined vocabulary content list published by OCR. Answers do not generally depend on knowledge of this vocabulary, apart from at the higher end of the Higher Tier paper. Centres may find it useful to draw future candidates' attention to this point.

Candidates wrote clearly. We are grateful to centres for continuing to train candidates to cross out any notes or discarded answers carefully so as to avoid accidentally invalidating otherwise correct responses.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Foundation Tier A723/01

- Ex 1** This exercise targeted Grade G. All questions were answered well with only Question 3 and Question 4 causing occasional difficulty to a few candidates.
- Ex 2** This exercise targeted Grade F. Most candidates answered well and scored high marks. In Question 13 weaker candidates did not know *libre* and a good number mistook it for *libro* and so answered 'reading time' or made other guesses.
- Ex 3** This exercise targeted Grade E. Most candidates continued answering well. Question 22 was the most challenging overall, candidates perhaps not knowing *portuguesa* or not linking it to the notion of another country. As in Unit A721, the requirement by this stage of the paper to begin to process longer units of language, rather than individual items of vocabulary, differentiated effectively.
- Ex 4** This exercise targeted Grade D and, as part of the paper design, the level of demand increased. Candidates were required to process longer continuous text and very often the answers were embedded in the paragraph, rather than at the beginning or end. The vocabulary was more complex and the conceptual level increased, as the text required candidates to follow elements of Javi's biography. This exercise differentiated very effectively at its intended design grade. Questions 27, 29 and 31 in particular challenged all but the most able candidates at this level. *Pez* was not well known and, in line with comments made in the report for Unit A721, this serves as a reminder that the full range of the defined content vocabulary may be tested and so centres should not neglect topics that are not used for controlled assessment, as this can narrow candidates' comprehension skills.
- Ex 5** This exercise targeted Grade C. It was successful in differentiating at this level, with Questions 37 and 38 being the most challenging, but other questions being generally well answered, with the topic area well known to most candidates.

## Higher Tier A723/02

- Ex 1** This exercise targeted Grade D and was well answered by the majority of Higher Tier candidates. Questions 5 and 7 proved the most challenging. The pattern of responses was noticeably better than those of Foundation Tier candidates on the equivalent exercise, which is a further indication of candidates being entered at the correct tier.
- Ex 2** This exercise targeted Grade C and required candidates to process more language and understand gist as well as detail. As part of the pattern of differentiation, the conceptual level of demand rose and the exercise began to deal with feelings and points of view, which are part of the grade description for Grade C. The vast majority of candidates at this tier dealt with the exercise without difficulty, and there was no identifiable pattern of incorrect response.
- Ex 3** This exercise targeted Grade B. It was well answered by the majority of candidates and only Question 22 proved challenging, with many candidates not conceptually linking *al aire libre* with the notion of 'in the streets'.
- Ex 4** This exercise targeted Grade A. As is to be expected, the level of both vocabulary and linguistic processing rose to match the requirements of the published grade descriptor for Grade A. Candidates did not need to deal with many different time-frames, but the information was complex and required precise knowledge of vocabulary as well as the ability to draw inferences. Exercise types at this grade can vary from year to year. This exercise type, with candidates required to formulate their own answers in English, led to wide variability in the responses. The most demanding questions were Questions 27, 28 and in particular 32, where the unfamiliar item of vocabulary, the verb *emborracharse*, was known by very few candidates. It was supported in the text by reference to *botellón*. This exercise differentiated very effectively at its projected grade.
- Ex 5** This exercise targeted Grade A\* and, as is to be expected, challenged all but the most able candidates. Questions 37 and 39 proved the most challenging. The multiple-choice exercise type, although not necessarily always used at this grade, proved effective in enabling differentiation at the top end of the candidature, as there were elements of distraction in the possible responses and the cognitive demand was increased by the requirement to process options in Spanish.

## Unit A724 Writing

### General Comments

In this unit the quality of the material submitted was similar to previous years, with the range of topics covered being much the same. Popular topic areas were Holidays, School Life, Town and Local Area, the Environment, a Film Review, Work Experience and Healthy Living.

The majority of centres set tasks that were generally appropriate and some Centres set interesting tasks which had a different emphasis, for example, writing to a friend about the threatened closure of a local library, a task which produced some excellent responses. Many candidates wrote with enthusiasm on the topic of Holidays and produced some lively and imaginative pieces; there were some excellent personal accounts of a successful, or even disastrous holidays. Writing about the environment worked well with very able students, as it encouraged the expression of opinions and was often linked with local area. However, this topic was frequently too challenging for weaker candidates. In addition, more able candidates coped well with topics such as writing a job application letter or a review of a film or TV programme, offering their opinions with enthusiasm, whereas weaker candidates' command of the language was inadequate for expressing their points of view in these more complex topics. Centres which had prepared their candidates effectively had used tasks which allowed a range of expression. However, there was unfortunately little evidence of centres offering differentiated tasks to their candidates. The use of the same task for candidates across the ability range can penalise candidates at both ends of the ability range: at once too challenging for the less able, and yet offering the more able insufficient scope for evaluation and creativity.

The biggest problem remains the lack of truly individual response to the task set. Candidates in many centres are still clearly working from a template. This had the effect of stifling the candidate's creativity because they all wrote slightly better or worse versions of the same thing and struggled to maintain consistency and control throughout the piece. Candidates who had attempted to learn the piece by heart tended to start well but deteriorated after the first few lines. Whilst memorising structures and phrases is an important part of language learning, it is only truly effective if the candidate can combine it with the ability to manipulate the language. Where the candidate does not have this ability, the results can be variable, with sentences being merged and words presented in an incorrect order. Often the meaning is obscured, as the language has not been memorised correctly. Candidates should therefore be encouraged to produce individual responses to tasks appropriate to their level of ability.

Centres should also think about the length of candidate responses. Many candidates produced overly long pieces (including some of 600 words), irrespective of ability. Sometimes, in fact, more able candidates were able to express themselves well in a concise way and still gain excellent marks. However, weaker candidates who write a long piece tend to repeat material, and the quality of their language deteriorates as the piece develops. They very soon lose overall control. Centres should emphasise to their candidates that a higher word count does not automatically mean a better mark.

On the whole, candidates are becoming more adept at varying clause types, with the use of structures such as *así que*, *puesto que*, *ya que* and *dado que* offering variety from the still generally overused *porque*. There is evidence of a variety of tenses being used, with Perfect and Pluperfect being introduced, and even some instances of the subjunctive being used successfully after expressions such as *espero que* and *cuando* with future time. However, many candidates made errors with anything other than the first person singular of the verb and there are continuing issues with candidates not using accents to distinguish between the third person of the Preterite Tense: *bailó* and the first person of the Present: *bailo*, which can cause the message to become unclear.

Many candidates attempted to use ambitious structures such as *si tuviera* or *si pudiera* coupled with the Conditional Tense, as well as: *lo bueno es que*, *diría que* together with a variety of idiomatic language. It is encouraging to see centres equipping their candidates with such structures, although this can sometimes cause problems with students who memorise difficult structures without really understanding them, resulting in a nonsensical statement because words have been omitted or have been written in the wrong order.

Candidates continue to struggle with the uses of *ser* and *estar* and the use of the Infinitive after a finite verb, for example, *espero voy ...* and *quiero tengo....* Candidates still struggle to use *gustar* correctly, either using the incorrect ending or following it with a finite verb, for example, *mis hermanos gustan ir al cine* or *me gusta juego al fútbol*. Another common mistake was the failure to insert *que* when linking sentences, for example *Tengo un hermano se llama Juan* or *Creo mate es aburrido*, and there were many instances of mistakes in the most basic phrases: *mi gusta, mi llamo es...*

Poor spelling continues in many pieces, including the inappropriate use of double consonants, despite candidates having access to a dictionary. Indeed, the dictionary can be a “false friend” for those candidates who have clearly not been trained to use it, which results in phrases such as *yo y mi familia mosca a España* or *me gusta reloj el fútbol*. In addition, misuse of punctuation can also lead to an unclear message in sentences such as *En vacaciones me gusta. Tomar el sol y nadar*.

Centres should encourage candidates to always read through their piece, revising and correcting where necessary. This will help avoid a lack of consistency within a piece where, for example, *me gusta* is followed a few lines later by *mi gusta*.

Overall, it is important to stress that centres should try to facilitate the opportunity for their students to produce their best work by tailoring the task to their needs and by encouraging them to use the language that they have been taught to produce an individual response rather than following a template.

## Administration

The majority of centres dispatched their submissions to the designated examiner on time with the relevant paperwork completed. However, there are still centres which fail to submit the CCS160 form (without which they are in breach of the Ofqual Code of Practice) or the attendance register. This causes problems for the examiner in finalising a centre’s marks because some candidates’ submissions are missing. Centres are reminded of the importance of completing a cover sheet (GCW939) carefully and accurately for each candidate, arranging the pieces in the order as shown on the cover sheet and sorting the submissions into candidate number order. The old-style cover sheet is no longer in use.

It is also helpful to the examiner if centres ensure that each submission is held together by using treasury tags, rather than by plastic wallets, folders, staples or paper clips. These are less secure in that pages become separated from the remainder of the submission and they are also time-consuming for the examiner.

It is the centre’s responsibility to ensure that the Writing Notes Form (Candidates) (GCW935) is correctly completed; the Specification gives the following guidance:

- *Notes should contain no more than 40 words: 5 bullet points with no more than 8 words per bullet point. This can include conjugated verbs.*

It is not intended that candidates should write in whole sentences which can then be “lifted” into the piece.

*OCR Report to Centres - June 2014*

In addition, the centre should advise their candidates on the importance of legible handwriting; the examiner must be able to read the task in order to assess it. Poor handwriting which obscures the verb endings or adjectival agreements means that the examiner is unable to give the language the credit it is due.

Finally, Centres are reminded that this is an examined unit and that they should not complete the cover sheet with their own marks, nor should there be any marks on the work itself.

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