

GCE

Spanish

Advanced GCE A2 **H477**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H077**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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F721/01, 02, 03 Speaking (AS)

General Comments:

The majority of candidates had been prepared well and understood the requirements of each section. Most candidates were given suitable opportunities by Teacher/Examiners to show what they knew and could say.

A few Centres still need to remember that the correct option codes are: 01 for mp3 files (uploaded to the OCR Repository) and 02 for CDs (sent to the marking assessor). Recordings, together with headed working mark sheets and topic forms for each candidate, should be uploaded or sent as soon as the tests have been completed.

The two parts of the test are equally weighted. Care should be taken to observe the prescribed timings. In part one the sequence for role-plays as printed in the examiner's booklet should be followed.

In part one candidates need to convey essential information found in the stimulus material, and be prepared to address readily questions, queries and concerns raised by the client (Teacher/Examiner). Many candidates were well trained to engage with the Teacher/Examiner at the start of the role-play, e.g. *Aquí tengo un folleto / producto (etc.) perfecto para ti...* and also provided the information in a relevant and persuasive manner. There were several well thought-out answers to the extension questions. Some candidates, however, treated the stimulus material merely as an exercise in summary or translation: it is important to remember that interaction between Teacher/Examiner and candidate is essential to allow proper development of the role-play. In a few cases, Teacher/Examiners gave candidates insufficient opportunity to cover or clarify the information on the stimulus sheet and instead asked a number of extra questions only tenuously linked to this.

In part two, the topics were for the most part well researched, and many candidates were able to elaborate or justify points listed on their topic forms, showing a personal interest and involvement in the issues covered. In some Centres, however, there was a distinct lack of variety, with many candidates repeating near-identical statements with minimal development of ideas. At times candidates were even invited to offer a series of mini presentations, in some of which the speed of delivery and flatness of intonation rendered parts of the content almost unintelligible. As in part one, Teacher/Examiners should encourage a discussion to develop, and should interact significantly with the candidates if higher grades are to be achieved.

Quality of language is assessed in both parts. Many candidates made a real effort to widen their range of structures, including the correct use of the subjunctive, appropriate range of tenses, concrete and hypothetical registers. Weaknesses included the perennial slips with *gustar*, uses of *ser/estar*, adjectival agreements, problems with pronouns (*para tú* being particularly common), verb endings and basic numbers. Elementary errors of accuracy were often present even in otherwise good candidates. Some expressions now seem endemically corrupted: (*Yo creo que*) *no es vale la pena*; *no problema* being just two. There was also a tendency to insert expressions such as *que yo sepa*; *es de suma importancia*; *ojalá pudiera concluir diciendo...* in statements whose context or register rarely merited them.

Pronunciation was generally good or very good, seldom less than acceptable, though intonation continues to be a key differentiator. Both intonation and correct stressing were adversely affected when candidates went into auto-pilot mode while mentally reading a script as their answer in the topic section.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Part 1: Role-plays

The Teacher/Examiner's role as client is paramount, because to some extent the Teacher/Examiner's performance is the key to a candidate's success. Where, for instance, the Teacher/Examiner forgets to ask a certain prompt question, this may have a detrimental effect on the candidate's Use of Stimulus score. Then again, asking questions about points already covered by the candidate (a fairly frequent occurrence) causes confusion because candidates may lose their train of thought. Where candidates encountered difficulties, this was frequently because they tried to translate the stimulus material literally rather than conveying the underlying idea or activity.

At the start of each role-play, candidates have to ask the Teacher/Examiner questions. Candidates' ability to formulate questions continues to vary considerably. Many would profit from more practice in this.

Role-play A

This concerned a company that delivered fresh vegetables to customers' houses. Candidates were required to give information about the service offered, the discounts available and why the customer should be able to trust the company. In the extension questions, candidates discussed a meal they had enjoyed recently and whether it was better to shop in a supermarket or in a local shop.

Vocabulary items that caused difficulty included "home-made", and "money back" ("volver el dinero" was often used). Many candidates seemed unsure of how to convey the concept of "selection changes regularly". Points of content that were sometimes omitted included the use of local farmers and the fact that five sizes and prices were available.

The extension questions were handled well – virtually all candidates had balanced and well developed views on shopping at the supermarket or in the local shop.

Role-play B

Candidates were required to explain the advantages of using TAG on the Severn River crossings. The essential content points were covered fairly readily, particularly the notion of two separate routes, although a surprisingly large number of candidates were unaware of the word "puente" and attempted a variety of ways of explaining how to cross the river without actually using the correct word. The word "parabrisas" also proved a problem for many candidates, but this was successfully conveyed by paraphrasing. Not all candidates made the point that the yellow light was an indication to top up the TAG card. Numbers, however, were frequently poorly handled, with wide-ranging errors – candidates being unaware of how to express 1966, 30 years later or M4 motorway. Other points randomly omitted included avoiding queues and the fact that payment was made when entering Wales.

Again, most candidates had used their preparation time effectively to approach the extension questions about their opinions on travel by car and whether it would be a good idea to live far from your place of work.

Role-play C

Candidates had to explain the festivals in Edinburgh and what was special about the Fringe Festival. They also had to explain how to obtain tickets and whether any discounts were available. They coped well overall with some of the simpler points of content but sometimes ran into difficulties if they tried to translate literally the expressions used in the stimulus material, e.g. "big names and those starting up", "recharge your batteries". Nevertheless, the majority found sensible ways of conveying the information.

Vocabulary hurdles for some included: "box office", "full-time student", and "countryside". There was also uncertainty over the fact that the website was only for prices, the actual tickets only being available at the box office when one applied in person.

The second extension question about how to live a healthy life was generally answered well. The first, which asked what type of entertainment they liked was more challenging, at least in linguistic terms, since it invited more abstract language, as well the use of *gustar*.

Role-play D

Candidates had to inform a client of the Free Childcare Scheme and answer questions about cost and the various options available. The majority of candidates managed to convey the information although the main details missed were: qualified childminders could look after children at home, the Government paid through local councils and that staff were available who could speak languages other than English.

The extension questions gave plenty of scope for variety. The first question, on the candidate's early recollections of school, was particularly enthusiastically covered.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

Centres were careful to keep within the topic areas prescribed in the Specification, though a fairly limited range of topics tended to be chosen. The most popular included *la comida española / la dieta mediterránea, el tabaquismo, turismo, deportes*. Outside these areas there were some instances of more individual interest, such as the changing nature of the family, educational trends in Spain, shortcomings in opportunities for training and education for young people. A number of candidates used a film, book or play to illustrate relevant aspects of one of the AS topic areas.

In terms of content, the quality and extent of candidates' research varied from superficial or anecdotal accounts, drawn from personal experience or based on general knowledge, to (in the majority of cases) a good analysis of the topic, supported appropriately by examples and justified opinions.

There were fewer examples of purely biographical accounts, but the information provided in certain areas, notably tourism and food, was of a rather basic level, occasionally little beyond that of GCSE, and there were also some over-lengthy descriptions of general aspects, such as the dangers of smoking, drugs, obesity, etc. but with insufficient focus on the Hispanic context. A further shortcoming was for some Centres to permit, or encourage, candidates to deliver a series of well prepared statements, heavy with statistics or factual information, or to participate in scripted question and answer, rather than encouraging a discussion in which to develop the ideas and opinions that are sought in the mark scheme.

Some candidates failed to adjust, for spoken delivery, the wording of what had been gleaned from written sources. The result was that material which would have been appropriate for incorporation in an essay sounded pedantic, stilted and unnatural in speech.

It was encouraging, however, to note that in many Centres candidates used their factual knowledge judiciously to engage in a lively and spontaneous debate with the Teacher/ Examiner; they were able to deal sensibly with unexpected questions. Such candidates were awarded good scores, and deservedly so.

F722 Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments:

This summer's examination contained tasks constructed around the topic areas of living conditions, cultural life, work and training and communication technology. The challenge was appropriate and a wide spread of marks awarded reflected the varying levels of ability of candidates. As always, at the upper end of the spectrum there were many excellent papers which were a pleasure to mark. However, no less satisfying were the answers from candidates who were determined to show off their more modest linguistic skills to the best advantage.

Although this was a demanding paper, there were very few signs of difficulty with time management. Candidates were clearly aware that just over one third of the marks available are allocated to Task 7 and, almost without fail, made certain that they left themselves an appropriate amount of time. Elsewhere in the paper the occasional question left unanswered was almost certainly more a result of oversight than pressure from the clock.

It was pleasing to note how candidates who were less accurate in their written Spanish were able to communicate ideas effectively. This was especially apparent in the transfer of meaning exercise in Task 4, and also in Task 7. In Tasks 6 and 7a there were fewer instances of blatant lifting of the text than in previous years. This was replaced by a tendency towards the copying of key words (in Task 6 especially), sometimes resulting in answers which did not follow on coherently from the question and left the examiner to supply the missing tense, person or linkage.

The presentation of the papers was generally good, although occasionally poor handwriting and spelling (English as well as Spanish) made answers difficult to read. It was encouraging to see the number of candidates who found the time to do a little rough work and planning to help them construct their answers.

Although papers were generally well presented, there were some instances where careless spelling and lack of punctuation could sometimes spoil the overall impression of an answer. Those few candidates who need to word-process their papers should remember that typographical errors have to be considered as linguistic errors.

Most candidates wrote their answers in the area indicated on the paper, although examination pressure inevitably led to instances of crossings out and the use of asterisks or arrows to point to answers in the margins, outside the scanned area or on extra pages. Candidates should be dissuaded from offering alternative answers by using brackets or slash, as only the first alternative will be marked.

Only a very few candidates had been entered for an examination for which they clearly were not yet ready. The majority appeared to have benefitted from good training in exam technique and had been well prepared for the skills needed for each task.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

A wide range of marks were awarded for this multiple choice listening comprehension. Many candidates scored maximum or near maximum. Candidates should be reminded to write numbers clearly, as it was sometimes difficult to decide whether, for example, a 5 or a 9 was intended.

Question No. 2

This report about a travelling cinema in South America proved to be a little more demanding than Task 1. A full range of marks was recorded, with many candidates attaining at least 5 out of 10. As with the previous question, there was no really discernible pattern in correct or incorrect answers.

Question No. 3

Candidates seemed to relate well to Mauricio's situation and the advice which he was given. Many candidates responded well and attained good marks by expressing comprehension in clear English, including all the details that they heard which were relevant to answering the question.

(a) Most scored one mark by noting that Mauricio had been offered three days' work preparing hamburgers in a restaurant. Only a minority picked up the second mark by adding that this was by nature of a trial.

(b) The advice that Mauricio should arrive a few minutes early was noted by many. It was also widely realised that one of the other pieces of advice concerned how he should dress, with a suitable translation of *con esmero* often posing problems. Not so many were able to show understanding of *que arregles bien tu cabello*.

(c) Although there were three possible answers to choose from as to why it was recommended that Mauricio asked questions, not many students got the full two marks. The answer that he might appear 'shy' was popular, although some candidates did not score the mark by failing to preface this with 'if not...' or 'otherwise...' etc. The second most popular answer was 'if he has any doubts', if candidates had not already used this wrongly in the previous question. Only the best candidates were able to successfully pick out the word *higiene* in a listening comprehension.

(d) Quite a lot of success was achieved here. There was occasional confusion as to whose 'opinion' it was that was being sought.

(e) Most candidates picked up on the idea of 'repeat' but not all were able to combine this with 'the order'. The phrase 'una sonrisa de manera amable' often presented problems in translation.

(f) Maximum marks were often missed here, either by failing to preface 'treat clients well' with 'if they see him...', or by failing to express the certainty that Mauricio would get the job.

(g) The first answer sought here proved to be a good discriminator. Only the very best candidates realised that *sería bueno que no te fuera a ver ninguno de tus amigos en estos días* meant that friends should not come into the restaurant to see him. The majority advised Mauricio not to go out to see friends. The second point, that he should 'keep all his attention focussed on his work' was almost universally correctly noted.

Question No. 4

Candidates are familiar with the techniques required by this question and it was good to see so many having a go at transferring the meaning from English into Spanish with absolute confidence. Any potential pitfalls from a translation point of view were often avoided with appropriate paraphrase, and many attained very pleasing marks for communication. The differentiation was far greater when it came to the quality of language mark.

The message offered opportunities for candidates to use more complex structures, and many took advantage of this. However, a surprising number failed to take the opportunity to use subjunctives for 'until I go to university' and 'they want me to work'.

A range of possibilities were acceptable for the opening question

The second phrase 'I've been offered a job in Spain' proved more of a challenge to render recognisably in Spanish. Occasionally careless marks were dropped by the omission of 'in Spain'.

How to express 'tourist resort' in Spanish required a bit of thought. Good candidates came up with acceptable versions, such as '*zona / área turística*'. Less able candidates were more likely to offer non-existent Anglicisms eg *resorto*.

There were many successful renditions of 'What's the minimum wage', although how to express 'survive' puzzled a few.

Better candidates were able to convey the meaning of 'entitlement to days off'.

Towards the end of the message some confusion was often apparent in terms of the subject of the verb ('you', impersonal *se*, 'I'). Some candidates started using one subject and then changed, giving rise to ambiguity (especially as quite a lot of them, by dropping the *se*, changed to a third person subject).

A surprising number of students appeared unfamiliar with *servir*.

Question No. 5

This question was very well done by the majority of candidates. Scores lower than half marks were extremely rare.

Question No. 6

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

A key recommendation to candidates is that they answer the question which has been asked. So often they had understood the relevant section of text, but overlooked the fact that the question asked required a change of person, not concerning Cecilia but what others did.

Not every question required a verb to be manipulated. Candidates could gain full comprehension marks with such simple answers as in (b) *belleza*, or using the infinitive where linguistically acceptable as in (c) *permitirla trabajar*.

- (a) Most answered this correctly. The final *-s* of *cumpleaños* was often omitted.
- (b) Many used an adjective in preference to a noun, which meant that a verb was also required. Sometimes unsuitable verb tenses would invalidate answers.
- (c) Candidates who attempted to use Cecilia as the subject of their answer were unsuccessful.
- (d) This question was almost universally answered well.
- (e) Understanding was generally good, and most picked up the mark from one of the two answers possible. Less able candidates sometimes lifted *vendría una treintena de publicidades*, which did not answer the question.
- (f) Both parts of this question discriminated well, with several details being required. Which beauty contest (Cartagena? / Miss Colombia? / Miss Universe?) plus unfamiliarity with the conditional perfect caused some time issues.
- (g) Many candidates appeared puzzled by what precisely Cecilia did to another competitor which upset the judges. Only a minority understood that she poked her tongue out.
- (h) This was generally answered well.
- (i) Candidates who used verbs in their answers were generally successful. Less success was achieved by those who relied on a preposition.
- (j) The tense used in the question, in this case the future, is usually a reliable guide as to the tense required in the answer. Answers such as *dejó de actuar* did not answer the question. The meaning of *embarazada* also puzzled a number of candidates.
- (k) This question was about Armando, and therefore it was essential that he should be the subject of the answer. Candidates needed to demonstrate clear understanding by using the preterite for answers such as *conoció a Cecilia* or *comenzó una relación con Cecilia*.
- (l) Another good discriminator, with candidates who had not carefully read the question giving incorrect answers which referred only to the couple eg *romántica*. The meaning of *oculto* puzzled a few.
- (m) Candidates who knew the Spanish for 'wedding' found no difficulty with this question. Those who did not had an opportunity to score the mark by using *se casaron* correctly. Even though this could be taken from the text, a surprising number of errors were made, notably the omission of *se*.

Question No. 7a

Candidates always seem to respond well to this style of text, comprising a letter from an anguished member of the public followed by the response of an 'expert'. This was no exception, and good comprehension was often clearly demonstrated. The majority of candidates were clearly aware of the technique required by this type of summary: to select specific details from the text which answer the question which has been asked. A small minority of candidates still attempted to include personal opinions here, instead of waiting for the opportunity afforded by 7b.

Nearly everybody understood that Marta had a problem with *ruido*, (although misspellings of this word were widespread), and most were able to give correct details about its origin and nature. However, there were some instances of candidates who thought that the children and the dog belonged to Marta.

When giving details of the psychologist's response many candidates had difficulty in switching the second person verb endings to the third, and many answers contained a mixture of both eg *Marta debe golpear su puerta* and then later *...escribes la hora*. Usually, this did not form too much of a barrier to scoring comprehension marks, but was taken into account when considering the overall quality of language mark for Question 7. All elements of the psychologist's advice appeared to be accessible to candidates.

Most marks were awarded from the top three bands of the comprehension grid to candidates who were able to communicate relevant specific details in sufficiently accurate Spanish. Several candidates achieved maximum scores.

Question No. 7b

In general students had quite a lot to say about this topic and came up with a wide range of arguments, mainly about the benefits of having good relations with neighbours. It never ceases to surprise how often that some of the linguistically less able candidates have a lot of say about the topic, with strong arguments and development and, despite the poor language, score a justifiably very high mark for content. On the other hand, unfortunately the reverse can also be the case, with candidates with a high command of Spanish having very few ideas about the topic.

However, for the most part a very wide range of relevant ideas were generated, going from thriving suburban neighbour networks, doing babysitting, housesitting, plant fostering and animal minding in caring, tightknit communities on the one hand, to families struggling in blocks of flats with noisy neighbours and unsociable people on the other. Candidates often gave examples from their own personal experience which were very pertinent to the topic. It was good to see candidates trained in the art of trying to assess both sides of the question and quite prepared to look at the other side: the right to respect one's privacy and choose not to be sociable.

A very small minority of candidates attempted unsuccessfully to incorporate pre-learnt essays into their answers. There was very little relevant topic development to be found in having neighbours who were terrorists.

There were some outstanding examples of effective, accurate language which showed a clear ability to use a wide range of structures and relevant vocabulary. Candidates who planned and wrote carefully, albeit often less, gained good marks for the accuracy of their language. Others who rambled on for four or even five sides suffered as the quality of their language rapidly deteriorated. Less able candidates often struggled to find an appropriate range of vocabulary, and commonly allowed the component parts of *llevarse bien* to suffer all manner of incorrect permutations.

Quality of written language was assessed for accuracy and range over both 7(a) and 7(b). In 7(a) better candidates wrote competent and coherent paraphrased summaries, whereas less able candidates were prone to linguistic inaccuracies which frequently meant that they were unable to demonstrate clear comprehension. Question 7(b) offered candidates the opportunity to show the full extent of their skills in written Spanish. It was rewarding to see how mid-range candidates and above continued to demonstrate an appreciation of how the quality of expression can be enriched by the addition of more complex structures. Work on subjunctive scenarios was highly evident and, even at the risk of sounding a little bit forced, *es imprescindible que* and *si yo tuviera (mi propia casa)* did give the desired lift to many candidates' work and put them up one rank for language or range or both.

F723 Speaking

General Comments:

As has been the case for several years now, the exacting demands of the A2 Speaking Test are fully understood by centres and candidates alike. Most candidates are able to perform to the best of their ability and teacher/examiners continue to be very good at providing their students with every opportunity to showcase their linguistic abilities. Meaningful preparation is essential, both linguistically and in terms of acquired knowledge regarding the selected topic for discussion in the second section of the test.

The vast majority of centres are fully aware of, and indeed act upon, the regulations as set out in the specification and the detailed rubric of the examination itself. Some centres still refer to the text for discussion in Section A as a 'role play' but apart from this it is obvious that teacher/examiners know exactly how to run the examination and, just as importantly, how to relax their students and support them through the process as smoothly as possible.

All centres complied fully with the requirement to record the tests digitally on to CD/USB or via the OCR Repository. Technical issues are rare now and those that do exist tend to be as a consequence of damage to discs in transit. Accordingly, it is well worth packaging CDs/USB sticks in bubble wrap or similar in order to avoid such damage. Some centres manage to send their recordings to examiners with a copy of the attendance register and no further documentation. Clearly, this ignores the need to enclose a Working Mark Sheet (duly topped and tailed but with no marks entered) and the Oral Topic Form filled in appropriately. The lack of such documentation results in delays to marking and is a major inconvenience for examiners. The table below clarifies the situation for anybody unsure of what to enclose in the script packet before it is sent to the examiner:

<p><i>Each recording of each test for each candidate must have THREE accompanying documents.</i></p>
<p><i>These are the Working Mark Sheet (WMS), duly filled in with the candidate's details and the Topic Sheet (Form OTF) with a list of TWO possible topics for discussion.</i></p>
<p><i>It is also important for the centre to make sure that the attendance register is sent to the appointed examiner. Some centres uploaded the attendance register onto the Repository but examiners still need to receive the carbonated register in the envelope with the address label provided by OCR.</i></p>

There were a small number of poor quality recordings. Poor recordings make it difficult to assess candidates' oral abilities in a thorough and fair manner. The continued use of compact mp3 recorders for these tests is to be recommended to all centres on the grounds of ease of use and recording quality. The microphone should always be pointed at the candidate and not at the teacher/examiner. It is fully understood that teacher/examiners are hard-pressed to find time but checking the quality of the recordings as the examination progresses is to be recommended.

As usual, most candidates were remarkably well prepared for the challenges of the speaking test in both sections (text and topic) and, as a result of such focussed preparation, they were able to perform generally in line with their oral abilities. The overall standard achieved this year was broadly in line with last year. It is felt that the texts in Section A managed to offer candidates

ample opportunity to respond to the stimulus material in ways that showed good, genuine understanding. Those few candidates who resorted to reciting the text word for word in their response to the questions asked lost marks somewhat heavily. Being able to rework the original text or paraphrase it in order to explain the issues using their own language is a skill that is far more likely to attract higher marks in Grids K and L as well as Grids C.1 and F.1. There were some centres, as is often the case, that opted to use their own questions on the text instead of the suggested questions from the Teacher/Examiner booklet. This is perfectly acceptable provided that the replacement questions manage to stretch candidates and allow them show off their abilities in terms of textual analysis and response to a written stimulus in Spanish. As was mentioned in last year's report to centres, simply asking a candidate to summarize the first paragraph, for example, might not always give such opportunities.

In Section B, most candidates presented their topic/s with interest, enthusiasm and linguistic flair and it was often a pleasure to listen to such topic discussions. Nevertheless, a number of candidates relied far too often on what certainly sounded like pre-learnt responses to questions they were anticipating being asked and therefore lacked the necessary element of spontaneity needed to attract good marks in Grid E.2. Previous reports have made this point before but carefully prepared sequences 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 with respectable marks.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Texts A, B and C

Texto A (*¿Son más ecológicos los coches eléctricos?*), *Texto B* (*El país donde ser mujer puede costarte la vida*) and *Texto C* (*¿Consumimos demasiada cafeína?*) provided the vast majority of candidates with appropriate levels of information in order to sustain a mature, articulate conversation with the teacher/examiner. Candidates responded effectively to the questions asked both on the text and, indeed, on the themes of the text. The development of ideas and the ability to express and justify points of view were somewhat consistently in evidence. All three texts appeared to be largely accessible and most candidates dealt well with the inevitable difficulties and linguistic challenges involved in such demanding textual analysis.

There were few, if any, serious misinterpretations of any of the texts although in *Texto B* some candidates struggled to understand the term “los perfiles de los agresores” in the fourth bullet point question on the text. Other than this, the texts served their purpose well and the responses from candidates were generally positive and pertinent. There were very few examples of candidates being given a text to analyse in Section A that clashed with the candidate's choice of topic for discussion in Section B of the speaking test. Centres fully appreciate the need to avoid this.

Section B: General Conversation

Many candidates were able to perform well in this section, especially in Grid M (Development of Ideas) given that they had sensibly researched their selected topic/s very thoroughly indeed. As has been the case for some time now, there continues to be some extremely thorough research skills amongst MFL Advanced Level candidates preparing for this unit. The majority of topics were appropriate and complied fully with the requirements of the Specification. It is now unusual to have to point out to centres that a candidate's choice of topic was inappropriate in that it was not compatible with the A2 topic list set out in the specification in Section 2.2.2.

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

differences in usage between the verbs *ser* and *estar* was still common in many candidates' utterances in response to the questions asked. Comments such as “la violencia doméstica está un tema muy serio en España...” [sic.] and “...un coche eléctrico estaría una buena idea para el medio ambiente...” [sic.] were not uncommon. As was the case last year, adjectival agreement caught many candidates out at all levels of ability. Even very basic utterances such as “...es una amenaza muy serio...” [sic.] and “el problema complicada...” [sic.] caused some candidates considerable trouble. There was also some evidence this year of the incorrect use of gerunds in statements such as “...suele ser una situación muy preocupando...” [sic.] and “el problema puede ser algo enfadando...” [sic.]. Some confusion was also apparent with some candidates between the first person and the third person of the preterite tense which resulted in utterances such as “...el gobierno empecé una campaña para combatir la pobreza...” [sic.] and “...Anita denuncié el maltrato de su marido...” [sic.] Clearly, this may well have been the result of examination nerves but such basic confusion is difficult to ignore when awarding marks for accuracy of language used by the candidate.

Nevertheless, despite such errors, there were many examples of candidates showing the ability to employ language characterised by a high and consistent level of accuracy and grammatical complexity. Tenses were often used naturally and many candidates were able to demonstrate real understanding of the need to produce an impressive range of vocabulary and relevant idiom in response to the questions asked in Section A as well, of course, as to those asked in the topic discussion in Section B.

F724 Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments:

The paper proved to be accessible to candidates of all abilities, with the final marks ranging from the very high to the rather low. The best candidates paid attention to the details required for the comprehension tasks and wrote accurate, detailed essays. The weakest candidates failed to answer some of the comprehension tasks or copied from the text apparently without fully understanding what they had written; their essays were generalised with an inconsistent level of linguistic accuracy.

There was no evidence of candidates' running out of time for the paper. On the whole, candidates produced scripts that were reasonably easy to read. Examiners always did their best to find those portions of answers that were written somewhere other than in the intended area of the page.

Overall, candidates performed well and understood the requirements of each task. Most candidates were prepared at least to a minimum Advanced Level standard for the Listening and Reading sections of the paper. There was some weakness in specific areas, such as answering questions in English, finishing sentences in Spanish from a given stem or the task of explaining phrases in your own Spanish words.

The use of language in the Listening and Reading tasks was generally of a good standard with candidates often using their own words successfully to answer the questions. Some candidates possibly needed more practice in answering such comprehension questions, since they tended to rely on transcribing (not always very well) from the listening texts or copying phrases from reading texts, without adapting their words to the needs of the question.

In the Writing section of the paper, some candidates were clearly well prepared for the essay, but there was a significant number who did not demonstrate real knowledge and understanding of their topic areas. Some candidates addressed the topic area rather than the essay title or overlooked the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive questions.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Listening and Writing

Task 1

- 1a) The majority of candidates had no problem answering this question. They realised that the Black Sea was not itself the remote place mentioned in the recording.
- 1b) Also a good standard of answers about the working conditions. Some indicated that the cave was 2 kms deep or simply that it was cold or dark, without the specific detail from the recording.
- 1c) Most identified the nationalities correctly and specified what the scientists had been studying for over a decade.
- 1d) Most candidates coped well and realised that a more nuanced answer was required than simply the word 'small'.
- 1e) Some candidates had trouble rendering *profundidad* in English; answers ranged from 'profundity' to 'deepness'.
- 1f) Most candidates found this a straightforward question to answer.
- 1g) Well answered in general, although some candidates could not find a suitable English word for *orientarse*. Some candidates failed to clarify that the feelers enabled the creatures to move AROUND and not simply to move.

Tarea 2

This task differentiated well with a full distribution of marks. It was necessary for candidates to pay heed to the use of tenses and full comprehension was required; for example, (g) where some candidates used *amenaza* without qualification or explanation.

2a) Most candidates appeared to understand the point that he had become the director, but some struggled to express correctly the idea of the change in circumstance, for example *se convirtió el director*.

2b) Well answered in general, although not all candidates picked up on the importance of the financial basis of the organisation's independence.

2c) Again most candidates answered well, but some referred to *dedicación a nuestras acciones...* (which repeated the idea in the question) rather than the support of those actions by donations.

2d) Again some candidates repeated the idea in the question (100% renewable energy) rather than specify what the consequence could be, i.e. combat climate change.

2e) This was challenging, although in this case examiners accepted correct transcription because it answered the question.

2f) Accurate answers made it clear that, with the renewable sources mentioned in the question, Spain had the possibility of generating more electricity than the country currently uses.

2g) Mostly good answers which picked up on the idea of job losses.

2h) This was a challenging question because of the words *agotar* and *rentable* in the recording. The answers required, however, were not challenging to many candidates.

2i) This question focused on the possible consequences of a 'green' approach to fishing; some candidates confused the words *puerto* and *puerta* in the first answer or did not appreciate the ideas of 'fishing in waters close to home' or 'eating local species of fish'. The third element – job creation – was better understood.

2j) Well answered on the whole, although there was a tendency in weaker candidates to transcribe rather than to answer the question about what should be avoided.

2k) The performance in this question was varied. Candidates had to specify what needed to be changed with regard to a law, which usually meant using a subjunctive verb.

2l) This was answered well apart from incorrect variations on verbs for the idea of *demolish*.

2m) This question was answered very well as there was a choice of information to use in the response.

2n) The majority answered these straightforward questions well, as long as they had read the questions carefully. They mentioned that traffic and pollution were reduced, there was less noise, and less importing of fossil fuels.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Tarea 3

The vast majority of candidates scored well here. They were required to match the words, omitting no word and adding no word. (c) *prolongarse* offered least difficulty; (a) and (b) required the relevant preposition to be included, *darles idea de* and *junto a*. (d) required an infinitive verb.

Tarea 4

This straightforward comprehension task was generally well done with most candidates scoring full marks.

Tarea 5

The task called for gap-filling to correspond to the meaning of the text. Answers generally required manipulation of the original text with appropriate grammatical awareness.

5a) Some candidates thought that the government had built the school. Quite a few answered in the plural.

- 5b) The spelling of *elegir* or *escoger* in the relevant tenses presented challenges to a considerable number of candidates.
- 5c) Well answered. Any appropriate verb that could take *muchos conflictos* as a direct object was accepted.
- 5d) Good answers to this more challenging item.
- 5e) In general the candidates answered correctly with *pocos*.
- 5f) This was challenging, particularly if candidates decided to use a verb.
- 5g) This final question was also challenging, requiring firstly an understanding that she helped her set up her business and then an appropriate manipulation of the text.

Tarea 6

This task appeared to be understood on the whole but candidates didn't always cope well with the different uses of *ser* and *estar* in (a), *hace / desde / desde hace* in (d), and *saber / conocer* and the tenses of *conocer* in (f).

- 6a) There were many successful rewordings to convey the idea of the destruction of her house and the separation from her son, for which a past tense was required.
- 6b) Generally good answers, although some answered from the parents' point of view when the question was about the children's outlook.
- 6c) At this point, a heading was missing on the question paper to direct the candidates to the most relevant section of the text. Most candidates were apparently not concerned by this and answered correctly and as intended; however, examiners made a point of accepting a wider range of answers here.
- 6d) Good answers, apart from the language issue noted above.
- 6e) Candidates who read the question carefully were able to report that what she missed was her mother; transcription from the text without manipulation gave another answer.
- 6f) A simple answer was required, that they did not know one another well or that the relationship was not strong. The language issue here is noted above.
- 6g) For the answer to be correct, candidates needed to refer to her responsibilities in Mexico.

Task 7

This task differentiated well with some excellent transfers of meaning. There were very few low marks. Some answers omitted words or phrases; others rewrote the original more than was justifiable within a reasonable transfer of meaning.

Points of note were issues with:

- la mitad
- los cinco años que lleva aquí...
- con pánico a que lo detuvieran
- entonces
- en seguida
- dejó de darle miedo
- salir a la calle

Tarea 8

This was a testing exercise that differentiated well. While there were elegant, simple and correct answers, it was apparent that some candidates would have benefitted from more practice of this type of task. The requirement was to explain the ideas in each of the phrases without repeating key words from the phrase.

- 8a) While many candidates expressed well the idea of 'saying goodbye to Spain', the idea of that being difficult for him was too challenging for some.
- 8b) A considerable number of candidates seemed not to understand the implications of *ya no*.
- 8c) The idea of 'closing the door' was generally understood; too many answers repeated the word *inmigrantes* or equated the word with *extranjeros*, which was clearly not adequate.

Tarea 9

This exercise required a given Spanish stem to be completed. This was generally well done. Most candidates appeared to be aware of the relevant information to use for each question, but some found it challenging to match the given syntax.

- 9a) Relatively few answers followed on from the stem, although the right information was given.
- 9b) Varied responses here; stronger candidates were able with ease to identify these points as part of Arnold's 'Spanish dream'.
- 9c) Many candidates answered successfully following on from the stem, although some appeared to misread the stem as *sabe hacer paella*.
- 9d) Most answers were correct. This was the least challenging of the questions, although some candidates surprisingly had problems with the form of the word *racista*.
- 9e) Again varied responses.

Tarea 10

- 10a) Generally answered correctly.
- 10b) Answered correctly by candidates who read the text carefully.
- 10c) This question required candidates to state what Arnold was able to do; this was challenging as it required a manipulation of information from the text.
- 10d) Some did not specify that he wanted to retire in Senegal. A few did not show that he wanted to set up his own business.
- 10e) (i) Some answers struggled to express the idea of helping them to go back to their own countries.
- 10e) (ii) This was a challenging question which offered little difficulty to stronger candidates.
- 10f) Good answers. Most were able to use the subjunctive if it was necessary in their answers.

Section C: Writing

There was a full range of responses. The best candidates wrote well-constructed, imaginative and detailed essays with a coherent line of argument leading to a clear conclusion. A few wrote superficially or mentioned points at random, failing to link them to the title. Some candidates wrote at length but failed to provide evidence that related to a Spanish-speaking country. This limited their score under Grid N. There was also great variation in the use of language: many candidates strove to include idioms and complex structures and achieved a high level of accuracy. On the other hand, some candidates struggled with basic grammar and produced elementary errors with, for example, adjectival agreements, the gender of common nouns and verb endings.

The most popular were questions 11 (unemployment) and 13 (energy) followed by non-discursive questions 12 (gender equality) & 14 (pollution). There were some good, well-informed answers to questions 17 (politics) and 18 (the arts). Candidates who attempted questions 15 (science) or 16 (medicine) often gave little or no evidence of research relating to a Spanish-speaking country.

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