



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SPANISH
GCSE**

SUMMER 2019

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Annual Statistical Report

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COMPONENT 1

General Comments

It was extremely encouraging to see that centres were well prepared for the oral exam and had the benefit of last years' experience to build on. Generally, the recordings were of good sound quality and were of the correct length. Teachers conducting the speaking exams did so calmly and sympathetically. Candidates were often confident and spoke clearly across the themes and sub-themes. The range of vocabulary was often impressive, and a wide variety of tenses was regularly used by the candidates, who also showed a knowledge of many high-level phrases and complex structures.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Role Play

At both levels, candidates who scored very high marks gave short and succinct answers, whereas candidates who gave over-long or over-complicated answers often self-penalised, making their answers ambiguous and/or inaccurate. This was especially costly at Higher where complete accuracy is needed for 3 marks. It was pleasing to note that many teachers felt confident enough to move swiftly on to the next question when it sounded as though candidates were in danger of giving over-long answers.

As was also the case last year, some candidates found the teacher's interaction to be distracting and a few candidates tried to respond spontaneously to the teacher's question rather than using their prompts and notes from the preparation time. Teachers had prepared candidates well for dealing with the unexpected question and there were also many excellent examples of meaningful and pertinent questions asked by the candidates.

The following points identify common issues that were regularly noted in the Role Play tasks at both tiers:

- *Reglas* - often taken to mean school subjects
- Candidates confusing *ganar* and *gastar*
- *Formación* – not widely known despite being on the vocabulary list in the specification
- *¿Con qué frecuencia ...?* – this structure often caused confusion
- *¿Cuál es tu día preferido?* -often a school subject was offered in response or days of the week were badly mispronounced
- *¿Qué tipo de persona eres?* - candidates would often offer a physical description.
- *Año* – often pronounced as *ano*
- *Carrera* – often misunderstood to mean 'career'
- *Un año sabático* – not widely known
- *Medio ambiente* – often mispronounced (also regularly heard as *enviromiento* or *enviromento!*)
- *Hispanico/ hispanohablante* – these adjectives were not always acknowledged by the candidates in their answers

- *Tipo* – candidates are often confused when they are asked for a ‘type’ of anything e.g. music
- *Ideal* – candidates at Higher Tier should know that if the prompt contains *ideal* e.g. *tu colegio ideal* then they should try to answer in the conditional
- *Ayer/ El año pasado* etc. – candidates need to have sound knowledge of key time phrases
- *Ser/ Estar* – many mistakes were noted, particularly for descriptions
- *Organización benéfica* - pronunciation

Photo Card

It was evident that candidates at both tiers had been well prepared for the Photo Card discussion, particularly for the first descriptive question. Responses to the questions were interesting and varied and many candidates gave innovative responses to the photo, such as saying what they thought would happen next or why they would/would not want to participate in the scene. There were even some excellent responses speculating on why the people in the photo might be feeling a certain way.

As with last year, very few teachers used paraphrasing in the Photo Card discussion, despite being allowed and few teachers also availed themselves of permitted questions and prompts such as *¿Qué más?, ¿Algo más?, Justifica/Explica tu respuesta* etc. to encourage candidates to give longer answers. Further to this, there are some areas of practice which could be improved in order to maximise the outcome for the candidate. These are the main pitfalls for centres to avoid:

- Candidates spending too long describing the photo, to the detriment of the other three questions.
- Teachers asking additional prompts in the description of the photo e.g. *What is he/she wearing? Where are they? What is the weather like* etc.
- Candidates not agreeing or disagreeing with the opinion in the third question and not giving a clear opinion with justification.
- Teachers asking extra questions in the Photo Card discussion, beyond the 4 allowed, encouraging candidates to produce language which then had to be dismissed by the examiner.
- Teachers changing the meaning of the questions or giving prompts and examples which are not allowed.
- Candidates failing to use the past, future or conditional tense in the last question of the Photo Card.
- Candidates repeating most of the question of the Photo Card back to the teacher in their answer and often making mistakes when doing so.

Conversation

This year there were some lovely natural conversations between candidates and their teachers, and the best conversations were ones where teachers adapted their questions depending on the candidate’s responses. The overall performance in this task at both tiers highlighted the excellent preparation that has evidently taken place in class. Teachers were able to put candidates at ease and it was fantastic to hear so many candidates who were confident and proficient enough to have a spontaneous conversation.

In order to improve performance, teachers should be mindful of avoiding the following:

- Asking complex questions from the very start of the conversation when one or two more accessible questions to put the candidate at their ease would be a better technique.
- Teachers speaking too much and sharing too much information.
- Using a rigid list of conversation questions over and over again, despite candidates not responding fully.
- Not asking enough questions in different tenses.
- Not making a clear distinction between the two parts of the conversation, which can be confusing for the candidate.
- Candidates asking questions (which is not a requirement of the task) and teachers giving overlong responses.

Summary of key points

Overall this year, candidates at both tiers seemed well prepared by centres for the three different tasks and were able to demonstrate a good command of more common topic-specific vocabulary. The vast majority were competent in their use of tenses and candidates knew how to express and justify their opinions. As a point of focus, it is advisable to work on pronunciation across both tiers, as many high-scoring candidates are losing valuable marks in this area. It continues to be essential to reinforce the pronunciation of key items of vocabulary e.g. *vacaciones, trabajo, jóvenes, medio ambiente, colegio* etc. It would also be wise to ensure that candidates are proficient in their use of less familiar items of topic-specific vocabulary e.g. *año sabático, formación, organización benéfica* etc.

Centres should be praised for the superb work that has been taking place in ensuring candidates meet their potential and there were many examples of excellent practice at all levels.

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COMPONENT 2

General Comments

This report relates to the 2019 Spanish Component 2: Listening examination and, in particular, to the questions which required a written answer from the candidates. There is further guidance and exemplification in the OER materials, which are available on the WJEC website and enable teachers to view actual candidate responses and to read in detail about them. The OERs also give guidance about marking and ideas for helping students improve examination technique. Teachers are recommended to look at OERs from both tiers of entry, as some guidance is overarching.

It will be useful for teachers of the Eduqas Spanish examination to be aware that the pattern and layout of the papers is very similar to the WJEC equivalent for Wales, and so the WJEC papers are very useful for practice. It will also be useful for teachers to be aware that this component is ramped for demand, so in the design of the papers there is a steady upward incline of difficulty.

This report also offers some guidance as to how teachers might refine and add to their already good practice, to help candidates in future sessions. This advice is spread through the report, so even where teachers did not, for example, have Foundation Tier candidates, it is advisable to read the report in full and act upon all the guidance regardless of tier of entry. It is useful for teachers to train candidates that each question / exercise on the paper is set within a distinct topic area from the specification. It is important for candidates to be aware that within a given question there may be a change of focus. For example, Question 3 on Foundation Tier was all about friendship, but several aspects of friendship are spoken about and a good number of candidates clung to the idea that the recording was about education and did not spot the move from revising together to helping out with fashion advice. As mentioned last year and emphasised in the OERs, candidates can usefully conduct a sense-check on their answers.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier

Question 1

This question was on the theme of transport and set in a UK airport. The question was a mixture of multiple choice and form filling. Single words or very short phrases were sufficient to answer. Most identified the setting as an airport and the destination as Barcelona. 'Puerta' was not always well known and some struggled to deal with the items that were needed to travel. 'Billete' was also relatively poorly known.

Questions 2-4

On the Foundation paper these were multiple choice questions or involved ticking the correct boxes. These questions were targeted as relatively low demand and designed to differentiate at the lower grades. In guiding candidates in future sessions, teachers will find it helpful to know that, even at the lowest level of demand in the new GCSE, it is not expected

that the testing is, in effect, a vocabulary test. This means that in all cases candidates need to process units of language. It is also helpful for teachers to train candidates that occasionally there may be distraction in multiple choice questions, for example a word in the recording that might refer to another box, but is incorrect in the context of the overall utterance. Question 3 was a question that had a considerable amount of distraction and required candidates to identify the overall message, because nothing in the options really gave them a context. In this respect the demand increased over question 2. In line with the ramped design of the paper, these lower demand questions were mostly answered correctly.

Question 5

It would be helpful for teachers to look at the interrogatives in this question carefully with students and teach them to use these as a way of sense-checking their answers. Each interrogative is carefully targeted.

- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly, with a good number making the leap to say 'school', which was acceptable for a mark on its own.
- (b) This question produced a range of answers, commonly 'interesting things' – this again is not the kind of answer an examination is likely to be designed to elicit and does not pass any kind of sense check.
- (c) Many candidates did not know 'apoyo' and guessed 'advice', which is not the same concept. There were two possible answers here and the idea of keeping secrets was the less popular choice, yet as it depended on a cognate, was perhaps the more accessible.
- (d) This proved to be a challenging question for many students because they failed to deal well with the qualifier 'antes'. It is useful for teachers to make candidates aware that by this point in the paper we can almost say goodbye to questions that rely on understanding a single word, particularly a near-cognate in a sentence with a simple structure. So, candidates need to look carefully for qualified language.
- (e) The change of focus here took many candidates by surprise and they missed the idea of fashion advice, perhaps also because the order of the sentence was reversed, which required higher levels of linguistic processing.

Question 6

This question required candidates to choose the three correct statements for each of the two grids. Teachers are reminded about the idea of distraction in objective exercises mentioned above. Candidates need to do two things: they need to identify the correct statements and they need to reject the incorrect ones. In preparing future candidates for this kind of task it can be helpful for teachers to ask students to identify not just the correct statements, but also say why the incorrect ones are incorrect. This gives them practice in learning to reject as well as accept, and is a tool to help them feel surer of their final choices.

Question 7

This two-part question required candidates to process ideas and concepts which are applicable to Spanish schools, but unlikely to be part of their own experience. All of the information required to answer was provided in the recording, and there was no test of cultural knowledge as such, but it is helpful for teachers to remind candidates that it can be helpful to put their own experience to one side. At a level of language, the demand increased. Candidates needed to identify a comparative (menos), a false friend (curso – academic year) and process time frames to connect what she hopes to do with the future

part of the recording. In part 2 they also needed to focus on what happened to Susana's brother, rather than his actions; the focus had to be on the consequences.

Question 8

This question caused many of the Foundation Tier candidates difficulties, but the design of the questions was such that all of them had more than one possible correct answer, with the aim of making the question accessible to candidates at both tiers of entry.

- (a) Lots of candidates did not know 'mariscos' or 'gambas'.
- (b) This question was better answered.
- (c) 'Camarero' was often not known.
- (d) Here many were distracted by ideas such as moving to the capital and setting up his own restaurant. Here candidates at Foundation Tier often did not connect the 'flag-words' in the recording with the words in the question, yet 'decidí' was clearly heard.

Question 9

There was a wide variety of answers for this question and only the most able Foundation Tier did well. This is in line with the ramped design of the paper. Performance on this question is a good indicator of correct tier of entry. Once again, the design of the questions was such that there were always more possible answers than marks.

- (a) 'Pobreza' was not well known, but in order to support Foundation Tier candidates, this idea was glossed by being followed up with a kind of definition ('gente que no tiene nada'). Teachers could usefully point out to candidates that this sometimes happens and that it is designed to open up access to difficult vocabulary.
- (b) This was answered well only by the most able at this tier.
- (c) This was answered well only by the most able at this tier.

Higher Tier

Whilst many of the comments that apply to Foundation Tier are also true in the cross-over exercises at Higher Tier, it is noticeable and expected that performance was much better, and this will be clear too from the content of the OERs.

Question 1

Most correctly entered Higher Tier candidates scored full marks on this question, as would be expected. 'Curso' again was the item of vocabulary that caused most difficulty and 'Repeat the course' was not an acceptable answer, because of the false friend issue mentioned already in the context of a Spanish school.

Question 2

This question caused Higher Tier candidates fewer difficulties than at Foundation Tier and most answered very well, but the same comments as above apply. 'Camarero' was not well known, however.

Question 3

There was a wide variety of answers for this question but Higher Tier candidates performed much more strongly than at Foundation Tier and it was clear that the pattern of differentiation built into the paper was effective for Higher Tier candidates from this point onwards. The

area where many still struggled, however, was with the precision needed in (c), where a rendering of 'entro' was needed in the context of shops – 'when he goes into a shop' not just 'when he is shopping'.

Question 4

This question required note-taking in English. In line with the ramped demand of the paper, this question also required a greater degree of accuracy in the responses, as well as requiring candidates to process more complex language. Again, the question provided many more possible answers than were required for full marks, which kept it accessible yet made it challenging. It was the detail about what older people like doing in their spare time that cause the most difficulties, perhaps because of the lack of single word concepts or cognates.

Question 5

This question required candidates to fill gaps to ensure that the Spanish texts correctly reflected and summarised the recorded material. In all but one case there was the possibility to lift language from the recording directly to fill the gaps. Teachers can usefully provide opportunities for students to practise this skill, firstly identifying correctly the likely part of speech (verb, noun, participle, number etc) and then looking at the possible ways to express that. The mark scheme provides detail of the possible alternative answers, and there were no real identifiable trends in wrong answers. There is exemplification of actual student responses in the OERs.

Question 6

This year, this question was a note taking exercise in Spanish, whereas in 2018 the equivalent task was a multiple-choice question in Spanish. It is important for candidates to be aware that task types are expected to vary a little year by year. The different performance in this question, as compared with 2018 is a partial explanation of some minor changes in grade boundaries for this component. This question differentiated at a higher level than question 5 because candidates had often more than one option to choose from and had to provide short phrases rather than single words, but nevertheless all answers could be arrived at without manipulation of the forms of the language. Examiners were tolerant of any kind of grammatical error, provided there was unambiguous communication. There is exemplification of actual student responses in the OERs. A small number of candidates answered in English and so were awarded no marks. It is worth teachers reminding candidates that the two questions where they need to answer in Spanish always appear consecutively in the paper and will never be in the first three overlap questions.

Question 7

This reportage type question required note-taking in English and made considerable use of glossing in terms of routes to answers and support for difficult ideas or less commonly used vocabulary. The focus on skills in the workplace is a GCSE rather than a Key Stage Three topic, and it is hoped that the ideas expressed might be helpful in preparing students for the speaking test on this topic. The recording is short and quite densely packed with information. Commonly misunderstood words were 'datos' – often given as 'dates' and 'juicio'. By this point in the paper candidates are required to process abstract concepts as well as concrete ideas, yet the question was designed in such a way that everything was explained, so for candidates who didn't know what emotional intelligence was, it was glossed in context.

Question 8

This question dealt with the theme of e-safety, but given that this was the second to last question, the concepts and ideas were non-standard, so whilst a familiar topic to UK students, the answers were not obvious or guessable. Teachers can usefully remind students that they need to listen very carefully to the recording and sometimes slightly set aside their own ideas. There was some evidence in the annotations of papers that candidates had guessed possible answers in the preparation time and then convinced themselves they had heard what they thought they should do, or what common sense might dictate. This question tests the skills of inference and understanding overall messages.

- (a) Many candidates struggled with the sense of the negative idea here.
- (b) This question caused the most difficulty, with very few candidates able to connect the idea of road-safety with the topic of the internet.
- (c) This question was better answered with many identifying the ideas of fear or ignorance.
- (d) Here the word 'primaria', was essential and some lost the mark by being too general and saying 'school'. This is part of differentiation at Higher Tier, where the same word tested in Foundation Tier was interpreted more freely.
- (e) Many correctly identified these ideas.
- (f) This was generally better answered, but still lots of candidates put very general and unfocussed answers such as 'it's dangerous'.

Question 9

This final question, as part of the ramped design of the paper, was the most challenging. Despite this, many of the more able candidates scored marks and showed understanding. In fact, when teachers work with candidates using the transcript, the vocabulary itself is not the prime difficulty. There are lots of words that the average candidate would reasonably be expected to know.

In this question there was a wide range of less common vocabulary and complex grammatical structures with comparatives, passives and the use of the first person plural, which is a less common verb form. There were also requirements to distinguish time-frames and deal with conceptual challenges in terms of the content. From the familiar context of e-safety in question 8, there was a shift to content outside the direct experience of most candidates. Only the most able candidates scored full marks, but (c) was best answered and (e) caused the most difficulty for 2 marks.

Summary of key points

- Only a small number of candidates lost marks by ticking more boxes than required or not ticking sufficient boxes in the objective tasks. Teachers, however, can usefully consolidate the message that rubrics need to be followed carefully.
- Candidates should be reminded always write concisely and avoid adding extra information as this often leads to losing marks. As a rule, they should not need to write more information than can fit in the space.
- Candidates should be reminded always to read the rubrics carefully to ensure they give the correct amount of detail in their answers. Giving three details in a 2-mark question can cause marks to be lost if one of the details is incorrect.
- Some candidates did not read the English questions properly and gave answers with partially correct information that did not answer the question itself. It would be helpful

for teachers to train candidates a little more in proof-reading their answers to check that they are logical to the question asked.

- It would be useful to train candidates to home in on the interrogatives in the questions. If the question asks 'where?', the answer should be a place. In designing the papers we pay particular attention to the use of precise interrogatives and this can be missed by candidates. For example, a question that asked, 'Where did Gala meet her friend?' was answered 'through her cousin', which whilst just about satisfactory as a spoken answer, would never be an exam question.
- Some candidates occasionally answered in Spanish despite the fact that the rubric indicated that it should be written in English, or vice versa. It is useful to train candidates that they always answer in the same language as the question.

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COMPONENT 3

General Comments

This report relates to the 2019 Spanish Unit 3 GCSE Reading examination and, in particular, to questions which required a written answer from the candidates.

In the second year of the new GCSE, it was encouraging to see that the candidates were prepared for the demand of the papers and coped well, with less questions left unanswered than the previous year. The overall results were encouraging.

Both papers are designed to increase in difficulty as the candidate works through the paper; both the foundation and higher papers this year were successful in offering the candidate a steadily rising level of challenge and both differentiated well.

Comments affecting both tiers:

- In the non-verbal style questions, some candidates lost marks by ticking an incorrect number of boxes.
- Candidates should be encouraged to always attempt the question; some candidates still left too many blank answers.
- Answers should be concise and direct. Candidates who give too much information run the risk of losing the mark. They should be encouraged to use only the space provided on the question paper.
- Candidates should read the question carefully and aim to offer only one piece of information for each mark available.
- At the higher level, candidates are sometimes asked to answer a question where the answer is only inferred by the text. Centres are advised that this requires practice as many candidates continue to find this challenging.
- Candidates should check the rubric carefully to ensure they know how to answer the question.
- Answers in Spanish cannot be credited and should therefore be discouraged by Centres.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier

Questions 1-4

On the foundation paper, Q1-4 involved a variety of non-verbal style questions (multiple choice questions or matching sentences by putting the correct letter in a box) and Q1 also contained some open response questions. In Q2, 3 and 4, the rubric was written in Spanish, which still challenges some candidates. Q1 was generally well answered, with most candidates knowing *carne*, *barbacoa*, *bocadillo* and the sandwich fillings, especially *queso and jamón*, although *lechuga* was less well-known. In Q2 too many candidates ignored the instructions in the rubric

and filled in all eight boxes, thus unnecessarily losing marks, but overall this question was answered well.

In Q3, most candidates saw the connection between *autobuses* and *transporte público*, as well as *ir de compras* and *centro comercial*; some were able to link *apoyarse* with *ayudar* but the last three sentences proved to be more difficult. In Q4, some candidates clearly did not know the meaning of *datos y hechos* and many candidates were unable to link *reparaba máquinas* with *piloto de Fórmula 1* or *enfermero* with *primeros auxilios*, although (c) and (d) were answered well with candidates able to make the connection between *niños* and *guardería* and also *organizaba/planificaba* with *asistente personal*. This question proved more challenging for candidates than the other non-verbal style questions.

Question 5

This question required the candidates to read an article about a new shelter for homeless people and to answer questions in English. On the whole, candidates found this passage demanding and struggled to pinpoint the information needed to answer the questions pertinently, offering instead general statements about helping people and supporting those with mental health problems. Although it was clear that the term *sin hogar* was understood by many candidates, some failed to link the idea to the *residencia*, offering answers such as 'residential homes' or 'homes for the elderly'. Some candidates were unable to express the ideas of *reintegrarse y reinsertarse en la sociedad*, despite the use of cognates in the passage, giving generalised answers about social change but also about socialising. In Q5(c), the concept of *no sólo..sino que también* was poorly understood but many candidates were successful in grasping the two ideas from *podrán pasar la noche* and *podrán vivir ahí*. Q5(d) was surprisingly poorly answered; for *sólo cuando hace frío*, suggested answers included 'in winter' and 'at night'. Answers to Q5(e) were more successful, with candidates recognising *hacer una connexion* and linking this to the family but too many candidates recognised only *familias*, offering an answer suggesting help or support for the family rather than reconnecting the homeless person with his/her family. Candidates found this question very challenging.

Question 6

Question 6 was focused on an article about the job market in Spain; some candidates seemed to struggle with the slightly more abstract nature of the passage, offering generalised answers which did not always answer the question. Few understood the idea of jobs disappearing although more were successful when they recognised the cognate *nuevos sectores*. *Mundo laboral* also caused problems with many candidates interpreting the meaning as 'manual labour'. Q6(b) was well answered, with candidates recognising *avances tecnológicos*, but *buscar empleo* caused problems in Q6(c) as candidates did not always focus on the idea of looking for a job but sometimes offered the idea of looking for employees or even looking for information or shopping online. Q6(d) challenged many candidates; this question was often left unattempted and others answered with generalisations not taken from the passage (computers are the future, everything is on-line, everyone uses IT now). Q6(e) was generally answered well, with candidates able to pinpoint *ciberseguridad* as *una de estas áreas clave*, although others offered an incorrect answer as they focused on *programación*. This question also proved to be challenging.

Question 7

Question 7 was the first of two questions based on a literary passage. This question was based on a short extract from Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. In Q7(a), most candidates were able to give one or two details describing the stage, although some interpreted *una perfecta simplicidad* as 'simply perfect'. Q7(b) was generally well answered but the range of answers for *están comiendo* was surprisingly wide, with some candidates giving answers such as

acting, talking or arguing. Candidates generally coped well with Q7(c), although some gave answers that showed poor understanding of *una visita demasiado larga*, answering 'it's getting late, it's dark'. In Q7(d), *no nos vemos nunca* caused difficulty for many candidates who focused instead on the idea of her having problems with her husband. Q7(e) proved challenging for the majority of candidates; very few recognised *se peleó* and the words that they did recognise (*costumbres, hermanos, puerta*) produced answers referring to costume changes, locking the door or even 'he had a bad haircut'. Candidates continue to find the comprehension of a literary passage demanding.

Question 8

Questions 8 and 9 are the two questions that are offered at both tiers. Question 8 was based on a newspaper article about the start of the school year for Spanish children. In Q8(a), most candidates recognised *piscina* and *juegos*, although some candidates lost the mark by the addition of superfluous and incorrect material, such as 'playing in the sun/garden'. In Q8(b), candidates were generally able to recognise one or two adjectives from *tristes, irritables y ansiosos* but incorrect answers included 'irritating, angry, tired or anti-social'. Many understood the cognate *situaciones* in Q8(c) and were able to offer the correct answer but others gave more generalised answers about school being boring or having too much fun. In Q8(d), which was answered well by many candidates, others simply restated that it was hard to adapt rather than offering the reasons why. Candidates Foundation Tier found this question reasonably accessible.

Question 9

Question 9 was the second, and more demanding, of the literary texts at this level. This question was based on a short extract from *El árbol de la ciencia* by Pio Baroja. In Q9(a), most candidates were able to give the idea that Luisito was ill but a minority of candidates could not interpret *fiebre*, offering instead the idea that he was ill as he had eaten 'too much fibre'. Other incorrect answers included that he had broken his leg, had a fall (*se cayó*) or even died. Q9(b) was generally well-answered although some candidates lost the mark with answers such as 'obsessive, desperate, preoccupied', indicating that candidates are focusing on individual words (*obsesiva, desesperación preocupaba*) without processing the text as a whole. Many candidates successfully understood the idea of Andrés looking for possible clues for treatment of his brother's illness in medical books, but others offered incorrect answers such as calling the doctor or taking Luisito to hospital, showing poor comprehension of the information in the text. The doctor's advice in Q9(d) was given correctly by many candidates, with both possibilities for *esperar* being used, but there was a lack of understanding of key vocabulary by other candidates who simply offered guesses, such as that Luisito should rest, stay in bed, sleep, take his medicine or eat healthily. *Bañarle* also occasionally caused confusion, with candidates offering the idea of swimming. Foundation candidates found Q9(e) very difficult; the language here was challenging and few successfully gave the right idea for *no se le ocurría...la idea de que ella pudiera ponerse enferma*. Most candidates offered guesses such as her brother dying, her children and not getting enough sleep (*sin dormir*). However, higher candidates were more successful.

Question 10: Translation

Although the skill of translation is still relatively new to GCSE candidates, it was pleasing to see some improvement in the performance at foundation level this year. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of ensuring that every word in the sentence is considered; some candidates lost the mark by missing out one small element. It is also important to translate into acceptable English.

- (a) In the first sentence, many candidates were successful, although there were some candidates who translated *dinero* as 'dinner' and other candidates who offered 'my parents have no money'.
- (b) The second sentence was generally well translated, with only a minority of candidates struggling with *a tiempo parcial* and most being able to produce 'a clothes shop'. Centres are reminded that errors in English spelling are tolerated unless the incorrect spelling gives the word another meaning. The spelling of the word 'clothes' was poor, often given as 'cloths', but this was credited here as an exception to the usual rule.
- (c) *Antes* caused problems for many who appeared not to know its meaning or even thought it was a name. Some omitted it entirely and so were not able to score the mark. Many successfully recognised the tense of *tenía*, given in the translation as 'I had' or 'I used to have'.
- (d) Many candidates lost the mark in this box because they offered the wrong tense for *no me gustaba* or because they omitted to translate *nada*.
- (e) This section caused more problems as many candidates did not recognise either *encontrar* or *puesto* and some offered a translation about getting a part as an actor. Others offered an incorrect translation of *quiero encontrar un puesto* as 'I want to work' rather than 'I want to find a job'.
- (f) For the final box, many candidates did not score the mark as they failed to recognise the tense of *sería* and offered instead the present or future tenses. It was pleasing to see, however, that many candidates knew the word *guay*.

Despite some improvement from last year, this skill is still very challenging for candidates at this level and requires a lot of practice. Centres should focus on the importance of translating of verb tenses correctly but also on teaching candidates to consider every word, including connectives.

Overall, although some foundation candidates found this paper challenging, it was felt that candidates were prepared for the demands of the paper and were more willing to attempt the questions than last year, with the percentage of candidates offering answers being above 90% for all questions. The skill of translation and the comprehension of literary texts continue to offer the biggest challenge but it was felt that Centres are doing excellent work in preparing candidates for this paper.

Higher Tier

Questions 1 and 2

Questions 1 and 2 are the two questions that are offered at both tiers and both questions were more successfully answered by the candidates at Higher Tier, as would be expected. For detailed comments on the performance, please see the report for the foundation paper (Q8 and 9). Higher Tier candidates found both questions accessible.

Question 3

This question was a non-verbal style question, where candidates had to match up two sentences about young people and job offers. This question was generally well answered, although *madrugar* was not well understood. D and B were the most successfully answered, with candidates being able to match link *clínica* and *enfermera* and also *los fines de semana* and *los sábados*. However, too many candidates did not follow the instructions in the rubric which asked them to fill in six boxes, but rather used two letters twice and filled in all the boxes,

thus losing marks. Centres are advised of the necessity of preparing candidates for the requirements of the rubric to avoid the unnecessary loss of marks in this type of exercise.

Question 4

This question was a non-verbal style question, where candidates had to choose six out of ten possible statements based on a passage about the use of public transport. This question was very well answered with many candidates scoring full marks. Candidates found this question very accessible.

Question 5

This was the third of the non-verbal style questions and proved to be much more demanding than the previous two exercises. Vocabulary that appeared to cause difficulties included *acostarse*, *la madrugada* and *corridas* and many candidates failed to link *mercadillos tradicionales* with (a), thus missing the inference of *comprar recuerdos locales* and guessing instead at the distractor B (*bailar y cantar*).

Question 6

In this question, candidates were required to read an extract from a blog about a planned trip to Cuba and to answer open response questions in English. In Q6(a), many candidates were able to recognise *razonables* and gave a correct response; however, few were able to understand *ninguna ganga*. Q6(b) was also well answered, with many candidates giving an answer which focused on reading guides and blogs, although there were some who simply referred to 'researching' which did not score the mark. In Q6(c), many candidates recognised *con libertad* and were able to give the idea of freedom, although some candidates offered the idea that it was 'the best option' which did not score. Most candidates found Q6(d) challenging and there were few correct answers; *carreteras* was not well known and so candidates offered ideas such as the scenery or the weather conditions were better. Similarly, in Q6(e), few candidates understood the meaning of *particular*, so many candidates offered incorrect answers such as Airbnb, hostel, hotel, campsite or shared house, with no reference to the local people. Q6(f) was often misinterpreted by candidates who said that Yanara wanted to learn about the country or even learn Cuban rather than learning about how the local people viewed their country. Q6(g) was answered generally well, although some candidates lost the mark by referring to specific reservations not specified in the text (tables, hotels etc).but Q6(h) was less successful, with many candidates offering ideas about the exchange rate or simply that Yanara needed to change her money so she could buy things in the country.

Question 7

This was the second of the literary-style questions on the higher tier paper, based on an extract from García Márquez's *El Amor en los Tiempos de Cólera*. Most candidates answered the first question well, understanding *matrimonio* and, consequently, the idea of the marriage proposal. Some candidates lost the mark by the inclusion of the idea that Florentino had sent her a card, rather than a letter, to propose marriage. Q7(b) caused more problems; many candidates failed to understand the meaning of *devolver* and answered that Fermina had put the flowers in the bin or even had put them in the graveyard (from *gravedad*). In Q7(c), some candidates misunderstood the word *compromiso*, suggesting that Fermina wanted a compromise, and few offered the idea of not wanting to make a commitment yet. Candidates performed slightly better in Q7(d), with many able to give the aunt's advice but, in Q7(e), although they understood that Fermina wanted more time, many candidates did not give the idea of her asking for it (*pidió*). In Q7(f), most candidates recognised Florentino's ultimatum in *o ahora o nunca*, answering that he said it was now or never. In Q7(g), only a minority of candidates

were able to give the answer 'if he doesn't make her eat aubergines/eggplant'; it was clear that *berenjenas* was not well-known and many candidates wrote the Spanish word in their answer; however, some more resourceful candidates offered the idea that she would marry Florentino as long as he did not make her eat a particular food. Those candidates who did attempt to give a meaning to *berenjenas* suggested bananas, mushrooms, berries, beans or even Ben and Jerry's; others suggested that Fermina would marry Florentino as long as he did not eat aubergines.

Question 8

Question 8 was based on an article about the work of a theatre company to help Syrian refugees. The majority of candidates understood that the subject of the passage was helping refugees from Syria; however, there were some who merely copied from the rubric that the passage was about the recent work of a theatre company or gave the idea of helping refugees *in* Syria, neither of which scored a mark. Most candidates were able to identify *los olvidados* as women and girls or children in Q8(b), although some lost the mark by mentioning only one or the other.

In Q8(c), few offered the idea of raising money or funds or putting on a show to raise funds, failing to recognise the significance of *sin cobrar*, but more were successful in Q8(d), giving the idea of funding a boat to rescue refugees from the Mediterranean. In this question, however, *recaudar* and *recoger* caused problems for some. Q8(e) was generally well-answered with most candidates recognising *clínicas*, although some candidates did not specify that the clinics were for refugees; those who did not recognise *clínicas* gave more generalised answers about helping the refugees. The term *violencia de género* was, surprisingly, not well understood; many candidates gave the answer simply as violence rather than domestic abuse or violence against women. In Q8(g), a good number of candidates recognised the cognate *monólogos* and were able to give the correct answer, although there were issues with the addition of an incorrect number (17, 26), disappointing at this level, which negated the mark. Other candidates interpreted *obra* as an opera, and *espectáculo* and *interpretados* also caused confusion amongst some candidates with references to spectacular monologues and interpreters. Finally, in Q8(h), vocabulary such as *cobrar* and *sueldo* caused problems; candidates often answered that the 'actors made donations' without connecting the idea of not charging for their work or donating their salary.

Question 9

Q9 is the translation exercise and this skill continues to prove challenging for higher tier candidates. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of ensuring that every word in the sentence is considered, as many lost the mark by missing out one small element, and also the importance of translating verb tenses accurately.

- (a) The first box was generally well answered, except for those candidates who translated *Cuando estaba en el instituto* as 'When I was at school'. Candidates should consider the context of the sentence before starting to translate.
- (b) In box two, there was some confusion over the tense of *sería* and some candidates offered 'translator' rather than 'interpreter' for *intérprete* but, on the whole, candidates dealt with this section successfully.
- (c) In the third box, *aprendiendo* was often mis-translated as 'he learnt', there were sometimes problems with *estudió*, as the candidate failed to recognise the third person of the verb, and Portuguese was frequently mis-spelt.
- (d) Box four proved challenging for many candidates. In the sentence, *Su madre era francesa así que hablaba francés de pequeño*, there was confusion with tenses (his mother is French), the subject of the verb *hablaba* (his mother spoke French) and *de pequeño* (he spoke a little French). Again, candidates

need to read the whole sentence and try to put it into context before attempting to translate.

- (e) In box five, the more complex structure *desde hace* + present tense caused candidates many problems, with the majority failing to make the necessary change in tense in English to 'José has been working/has worked'. In addition, *ahora* was often omitted completely.
- (f) In the final box, *según él* was not well-known and many candidates gave the translation of *tiene el empleo de sus sueños* as 'he has an employee of his own'.

Surprisingly, some candidates thought that José was a female name, although this was not penalised.

Candidates are advised that leaving gaps in their translation will inevitably cause them to lose marks but, in addition, they may not be credited for something they have got right, as the whole box must be correct for the mark to be awarded. They are therefore encouraged to offer a continuous piece of prose with all elements attempted. In addition, they should be advised to avoid paraphrasing rather than translating. It was pleasing to see that most candidates attempt all questions at this level with the percentage of candidates being 100% for all questions except Q4, 5 and 9 where the percentage was 99.9%.

Summary of key points

Although there is much evidence that centres have prepared their candidates carefully and thoroughly for these papers, candidates' overall performance could be further improved by:

- A wider knowledge of subject specific vocabulary.
- Good understanding of grammar allowing candidates to identify key points.
- Sound knowledge of verb tenses and endings in order to help identify past/present/future events and to help produce accurate translation.
- Practice in the higher-order skills of inference, evaluation and deduction.
- Wider exposure to literary-style texts.
- More practice of translation skills with focus on detail of sentence structures.

SPANISH
GCSE
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COMPONENT 4

General Comments

As is to be expected, the performance of this year's candidates was very mixed. There were many excellent performances at both Higher and Foundation Tier, but also a disappointing number of candidates who failed to make much of an impression on the Foundation paper.

This report will address a number of areas for improvement, in particular the performance on Foundation Tier Question 1, the response to bullet points on all the extended writing questions (Foundation Tier Questions 2 and 3, Higher Tier Questions 1 and 2) and the performance in the translations.

Once again, this year a significant number of candidates are writing much more than is necessary for Higher Questions 1 and 2, and this sometimes seems to be a feature of almost the whole cohort from certain centres. It should be noted that the full range of marks is most definitely available to all candidates whose responses remain within the recommended word counts. In fact, it can sometimes be a disadvantage for candidates to write an excessive number of words.

Last year's report mentioned significant numbers of candidates who appeared to have been entered for the inappropriate tier, but I am pleased to report that this was not so apparent this year.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation - Question 1

A very disappointing response overall, with many candidates scoring fewer marks here than on questions which would normally be considered to be more demanding. The one positive aspect in comparison with last year's paper is that fewer candidates came unstuck by writing unnecessarily long responses.

All that is required here in order to score 2 marks for each part is two components: an appropriate, conjugated verb and another appropriate word or phrase. The intention is to give candidates a foothold in the paper, and errors of gender, agreement and minor spellings are generally overlooked.

For the first part, it was quite remarkable how many candidates were unable to produce either *Me llamo ...* or *Mi nombre es ...*. Please note, *Mi llamo ...* was quite a frequent response and was most definitely **not** considered to be a minor spelling error!

The second part, *Edad*, proved to be the most challenging of all. Correct answers here were disappointingly rare. Maybe the old textbook exercise of filling in an identity card has gone out of fashion.

The CPD materials based on last year's examinations advised centres that second verb infinitives could be required in this question, and this proved too challenging for many

candidates in the third and fourth parts. Specific training is needed in the classroom to enable candidates to manipulate verbs, so that *quieres* in the question becomes *quiero* in the answer, *prefieres* becomes *prefiero*, *te gusta(n)* becomes *me gusta(n)* and so on.

The fifth and sixth parts were the most accessible, with answers as simple as *Soy divertido* and *Hablo inglés* being perfectly adequate for 2 marks each.

Foundation – Question 2

This was the first outing for the relatively new topic of *Technology and Social Media* and it proved to be quite accessible to most candidates. The more able candidates were able to successfully use topic-specific vocabulary such as *ciberacoso*, whilst weaker candidates sometimes struggled to communicate clearly and occasionally resorted to English expressions such as *cyber-bullying*.

The first bullet-point proved to be the most challenging: *cuánto tiempo pasas usando los medios sociales*. Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates made no reference to time spent on social media. Ideally, we were looking for an amount of time such as *paso dos horas al día...* but we accepted a simple *paso mucho tiempo...* as coverage.

As mentioned in my introduction, coverage of the bullet points was an issue here. It seemed as if some candidates had prepared and memorised specific sections on the topic and wrote about, for example, the technology they used to use when they were younger, making no reference to the bullet-point: *las tecnologías que utilizaste ayer*. No doubt they were ticking the past tense box in their own minds, but it cost them several marks.

The third bullet, *los problemas de los medios sociales*, was attempted almost universally, with responses as varied as *hay demasiado ciberacoso*, *es adictivo* and *hay mala gente en línea*, or words to that effect. At least one candidate declared that *no hay problemas con los medios sociales, es todo muy bueno*, which is a perfectly valid response.

Foundation – Question 3 / Higher – Question 1

Everybody loves the topic of holidays, but the use of this topic for this question on this paper turned out to be both a blessing and a curse. On the positive side, this is a good topic to teach, with plenty of scope for use of different tenses. Even the very weakest candidates can usually manage to create some kind of coherent response containing at least one correct verb in the past tense, usually *fui*, and this was the case this year. However, the downside is that the easy familiarity of this topic led a significant number of candidates to fall into the trap which has become one of the main themes of this report: using pre-prepared responses at the expense of addressing the bullet points.

The first bullet, *el tipo de vacaciones que prefieres*, was the one which was most frequently omitted. Ideally, we were looking for an expressed preference for a type of holiday such as camping, luxury hotels or family holidays by the sea. As long as some kind of preference or liking was stated by the candidate, examiners had the flexibility to accept holidays in a particular country or destination as a type of holiday. The problem for many candidates was that they used no verbs of liking or preference, merely expressing the kind of holidays that they usually have. These responses often appeared to be classic pre-prepared answers, ticking the present tense box in the candidates' minds.

The second bullet, *una actividad que hiciste en tus últimas vacaciones*, was attempted successfully by most candidates. Many responses were very pleasing, with some of the more able candidates detailing both their own activities and those of other members of their family. However, once again, pre-prepared responses were in evidence, with a number of

candidates ticking their past tense box but merely writing about where they went and where they used to go, often demonstrating very good use of preterite and imperfect tenses but unfortunately giving no details of any activities. A few candidates misunderstood the word *últimas* and wrote in the conditional tense about their *ultimate holiday*. This same problem was flagged up in the report for last year's paper, when some candidates understood *tu último cumpleaños* as *your ultimate birthday*.

The third bullet, *un país extranjero que te gustaría visitar en el futuro*, was also well executed by the majority of candidates, with good use of future and conditional tenses in evidence. Apart from the use of *un país extranjero*, this is a very predictable element of such a task on the subject of holidays, so the vast majority of candidates were able to meet the requirements of the bullet point, whether by luck or by judgment! However, a significant number of candidates were either unfamiliar with the word *país* or chose to ignore it, giving the name of towns or cities rather than countries. Obviously, we were assessing candidates on their Spanish, not their geography, so we took a lenient approach; candidates would not have lost more than one mark for this error. However, it is worth pointing out that candidates should be taught that they do not have to tell the truth in these tasks. If they are required to give the name of a country and cannot think of the Spanish for the one they want, they should give a country that they do know in Spanish, provided that they do not end up writing that Orlando is in France!

Foundation – Question 4 Translation

The translation was once again, for most candidates, the lowest scoring question on the paper. I remain hopeful that centres will get to grips with teaching the skill of translation and that results will gradually improve. Some of the vocabulary used here was undoubtedly challenging, but candidates should always be urged to have a go rather than leaving it blank. This is because, as you will see below, examiners are often quite flexible as regards what constitutes an acceptable translation.

In part (a) the majority of candidates scored only one mark, and it was both surprising and disappointing that so many were unfamiliar with the word *bastante*. We also accepted *un poco*. In part (b), major problems were caused by the word *some*. The correct rendition of *algunas* was extremely rare. We also accepted *unas*, which was also rarely given. Candidates who offered *a veces* here should be commended for their resourcefulness, but unfortunately this was considered to be too far from the original meaning. *Asignaturas* was another surprisingly frequent absentee, though we accepted *clases*. In part (c), *siempre* and *demasiados* proved too challenging for many. It is worth pointing out here that a single correct word is never enough for a mark, but in this part, candidates who gave *Hay* and *deberes* were awarded one mark. In part (d), *Este* was beyond the reach of most candidates, as was *espero*, though *quiero* and *me gustaría* were accepted here, as was *bueno* for *well*. Part (e) was clearly the easiest section, though some candidates failed to appreciate that *ICT* could not be left as it was. The number of candidates who successfully gave *Voy a estudiar* was very pleasing.

Higher – Question 2

On the whole this question was tackled well by the majority of candidates, with some very pleasing, well-constructed and detailed responses. Most candidates chose the first option, *Tu instituto*, whilst about one third opted for *Tus planes para el futuro*.

As with holidays, the school topic has an easy familiarity which had positive and negative implications here. Many candidates wrote very convincingly about good and bad aspects of their school (*lo bueno y lo malo de tu instituto*) and what they would like to change (*cómo te gustaría cambiar tu instituto*). However, once again, a significant number of candidates gave

what appeared to be pre-prepared responses on the school topic, writing copious amounts of information about subjects and teachers, much of which was superfluous to the requirements of the task. If this information had been manipulated to be expressed as positive and negative aspects of the school, it could have been considered relevant, but usually this was not the case. Responses to the second bullet point were sometimes very impressive but often rather brief. A small minority of candidates missed the point and wrote about changing to a different school.

The second option was probably considered more challenging, hence the lower take-up. This meant that the majority of those who elected this option were more able candidates, resulting in a generally higher quality of response. Many candidates wrote very convincingly and sensibly about the pros and cons of going to university and their ideas about future careers. Fewer responses for this option appeared to be prepared or scripted. Coverage of the bullet points was excellent.

Higher – Question 3 Translation

As with the Foundation paper, the translation was the question on which most candidates scored the fewest marks. However, the number of candidates attempting every part of the exercise rather than leaving some parts blank was an improvement on last year. This was indeed a very challenging translation.

The first sentence contained the single most difficult element in the entire paper, with a tiny minority of candidates able to produce *noroeste*. One enterprising candidate offered *en el norte pero a la izquierda*, but unfortunately this was not acceptable. We did accept *en el norte-oeste*, provided both words were spelled correctly. The spelling of *agosto* was quite atrocious, demonstrating that centres should not assume that their candidates are familiar with such basics as numbers, days of the week, months etc. A pleasing number of candidates were familiar with *marisco* but we also accepted alternatives such as *comida del mar*. Most candidates found it impossible to produce a translation of *You could*. Ideally, we were looking for *Se podía*, but *Podías* was also good. Many candidates gave *Se puede*. Unfortunately, *at work* caused more problems than it should have done, as did *try the food*. *I thought* was also put into the present tense by some candidates, or often given as *Piensé*. *En mi opinión* was often given as an alternative here, but we were looking for a past tense verb, so this was unacceptable. Some candidates completely omitted anything for the word *all*, which was a careless loss of a mark. Able candidates successfully produced *lo odió*, though some omitted the pronoun or put it after the verb. It was pleasing to see that most candidates were familiar with *Había*, but not many dealt successfully with *singing and dancing*. *Tradicional* was often spelled the English way, and far too many candidates gave variants of *costumbres* for *costumes*.

Summary of key points

The poor performance on Foundation Tier Question 1 is a concern. It could be that centres have been prioritising the extended writing questions and that this question has been taken for granted or neglected. All the answers for this question only require what would generally be considered to be basic, familiar verbs and vocabulary. Please take particular note of my comments above about the manipulation of verbs.

The most significant area for improvement to emerge from this year's papers is to do with the coverage of bullet-points on each of the extended writing questions. Some candidates appeared to attempt to answer these questions with prepared responses on a given topic, paying little or no attention to the specific requirements of the bullet points. Many of these candidates demonstrated a commendable determination to include past, present and future tenses in these prepared responses, but if this was at the expense of a direct answer to the

demands of the bullet points, much of the response was considered irrelevant by examiners. This resulted in a significant loss of marks for these candidates and is a problem which must be taken very seriously by centres. Given that the rubric says *Puedes escribir más*, it is perfectly legitimate for candidates to include a certain amount of content which is not directly relevant to the bullet points, provided it remains on topic. However, this extra content is an option, not a requirement. As a rough guide, I suggest **at least two thirds of what is written should be focused on the bullet points**.

The translations on both papers were once again the most challenging exercises and the ones on which most candidates scored the fewest marks. It can only be a positive that the essential language skill of translation is included in these examinations, particularly when we cast our minds back to the days of coursework and controlled assessment, when so much depended on memory rather than language skills. Unlike memory, translation is a long-term skill which takes patience and time to develop. All I can do is urge centres to make translation exercises a routine part of lessons, perhaps in small, bite-sized pieces at the beginning or end of lessons, along with related tasks like synonym exercises.

Many thanks for all your hard work. I look forward to seeing how candidates' performance develops in the coming years.



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