

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE  
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

**JANUARY 2007**

**SPANISH**

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**GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**  
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**Paper 01—Multiple Choice**

This paper, which is composed of two sections, tested candidates' ability to listen to and understand a number of aural items in the target language and to read and understand a number of written items. Both sections required candidates to have sufficient mastery of essential grammar and vocabulary. The good performance on this year's examination (36.59) was comparable to the performance of last year (35.02). However, the paper still provided grammatical difficulties for the weaker candidates. Some of the problems that candidates experienced dealt with:

- I Vocabulary – inability to understand words / terms such as
  - i. *solitarios*
  - ii. *comisaría*
  - iii. *despedida*
  - iv. *fábrica*
  - v. *informes*
  - vi. *un cuento vs una cuenta*

II The use of the subjunctive

III The structure: *Hace* + period of time + *que* + preterite = 'ago'

For example, *Hace 22 años que se casaron.* OR *Se casaron hace 22 años.*

Candidates need to be given more practice in doing multiple-choice. They need to do exercises in Listening Comprehension on a regular basis, using both short and long passages. Teachers also need to expose candidates to a wide range of synonyms, antonyms and vocabulary related to their everyday experiences, thus enabling them to perform well on this paper.

**Paper 02 - Free Response**

**Section 1 – Directed Situations**

This section tested candidates' ability to respond in Spanish to a series of situations described in English and requiring written responses.

**General Comments**

The situations were straightforward and readily understood. Candidates responded extremely well to this section ( a mean of 18.84 out of a maximum of 25 marks) and many candidates confidently attempted to use the subjunctive. However, there were the perennial minor grammatical mistakes. Among these were the following:

\* An asterisk indicates an incorrect form, spelling or structure

- Lack of use/incorrect placement of ‘tilde’ as in *mañana*
- *En domingo*
- Absence of *que* after *siento* / use of *lo siento que*
- Use of *en* after *pensar* instead of *de*
- Agreement of *me gusta* / *gustan*
- *Corto* instead of *bajo* to describe a person
- *Me* instead of *mi*
- Appropriate use of disjunctive pronoun after *a* or *para*
- Incorrect spelling of *necesito*

## Detailed Comments

### Situation 1

Most candidates scored well on this item. Problem areas included the lack of use of *de* after *pensar*. One notable error was the construction which needed *piensas de que* + conjugated verb.

### Situation 2

Many candidates had problems with *el domingo*, *a las* + time. Errors included *en domingo*, *a son ocho...* and *en dos de febrero* – 2007, where the *de* is missing.

### Situation 3

This item was well done by the candidates. Most of them included the reason. Quite noticeable was the use of *ser* to show illness.

### Situation 4

This item was fairly well done, although there were cases in which candidates incorrectly used the Imperative. In some instances, *levantar* was used instead of *lavar*.

### Situation 5

Many candidates stopped short at saying “thanks”. In some instances, *gustar* was incorrectly used, as for example, *Me lo gusta* with the plural form - *Me gusta\* las blusas\**

### Situation 6

Some candidates misunderstood the idea of good wishes. Some responses to this included *adiós*. Vocabulary errors included *suerca* instead of *suerte*. There was also lack of agreement, for example, *buen suerte* / *buenos suertes*.

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Situation 7

Candidates performed very well on this item. However, some of them mentioned personality traits rather than physical characteristics. Errors included incorrect agreement and position of adjectives, as well as the omission of the article as in *tiene los ojos marrones*.

Situation 8

In terms of interpretation, some candidates wrote about change in date rather than in time. Many candidates correctly used *sino*.

Situation 9

This item was fairly well done. Some candidates failed to give a reason for wanting the book – *un libro* instead of *el libro* to describe a particular book. In addition, there were many incorrect spelling variations of *necesito* and incorrect use of *por / para*.

Situation 10

Some candidates expressed different emotions instead of the correct ‘disappointment’. Some candidates used ‘disgust’, and others, ‘anger’. Some candidates also seemed to have problems with the use of ‘*lo siento*’.

**Section II—Letter/Dialogue/Composition**

This section tested candidates’ ability to produce a piece of Spanish of about 130-150 words based on an outline given in English. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section (a mean of 16.74 out of a maximum 30 marks).

While all the questions were well within the range of candidates, most of them opted to do the letter or dialogue. The dialogue facilitated the writing for the weaker candidates who were able to use basic, simple questions on more than one occasion. For example, - *¿Cómo estás?* / *¿Cuánto cuesta?* / *¿Cómo te llamas?*

However, for many candidates the concept of a market became that of a mall. Tourists were being directed to stores such as “Payless” or to supermarkets. In the letter and composition, candidates focused on the development of just one or two points while the other points were rendered as one-liners. Perhaps for them, “keeping in touch” does not require much development. Admittedly, the percentage of better scripts was much higher than what is encountered in the June examination. It was heartening to see the correct use of the subjunctive in quite a number of scripts.

The following are examples of common mistakes made by candidates:

- The lack of the subjunctive or infinitive after verbs of emotion  
*Estoy contento que te encontré*
- The date being rendered in words rather than figures  
*El once de febrero de dos mil siete*
- Telephone numbers were also written in words
- ‘En’ used with the subjunctive instead of ‘de’  
*Fue el mejor en el mundo*
- Incorrect use of the verb ‘gustar’  
*Te gusta* - I like you  
*Mi mamá y mi papá gusta cocinar* - My mother and father like to cook
- ‘Tiene’ used in place of ‘hay’  
*En el mercado tiene muchas frutas*
- Inconsistency in the use of ‘usted’ and ‘tú’
- Reciprocity [each other] expressed as ‘cada otra’
- ‘Mí’ vs ‘mi’
- ‘Nuestro’ vs ‘nos’  
*Me divertí mucho en casa de nos\* familia*
- Use of ‘simpático’  
*El reloj es muy simpático / tu habitación es muy simpático*
- ‘Con tu’ / ‘con mi’ instead of ‘contigo’ / ‘conmigo’
- Use of ‘estar’  
*La reunión estaba aburrido / la reunión estaba la semana pasada / la cena estaba deliciosa*
- ‘Asistir’ vs ‘ayudar’  
*¿Quieres que yo asisto tu?*
- ‘Reunir’ vs ‘conocer’ in Preterite = To meet  
*Tienes que \*reunir a mi novio / ...era muy chévere\*reunirte*
- ‘Ir de compras’ vs ‘Hacer las compras’  
*... ir al centro para \*ir de compras...*
- ‘Tocar’ vs ‘jugar’  
*Hay los vehículos que\*juegan la música*
- ‘Pez’ vs ‘Pescado’  
*...Preparan un plato de \*pez y arroz*
- ‘Costumbre’ vs ‘Disfraz’  
*Me divertí \*mirar el color bonito y animado y \*los \*costumbres bonitos y únicos /  
\* La gente en Trinidad también le gusta llevar \*más tipos de \*linda \*costumbres*
- ‘Pasatiempo’ vs ‘Estancia’  
*Mi pasatiempo en Costa Rica \*estuve muy divertido*
- ‘Estación de Policía’ vs ‘Comisaría’  
*...a la derecha \*del estación de policía...*

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- ‘Alrededor’ vs ‘Sobre’  
\*Escribis en \*un carta a mí \*alrededor \*que dicen
- ‘Por’ vs ‘Para’  
Nos preparamos \*por el día de Navidad
- ‘Realizar’ vs ‘Darse cuenta de (que)’  
...pero cuando \*encontrámos \*realizé que tu \*estabas una persona muy simpática...

There were instances of the linguistic phenomenon of “interference” in the following cases:

- ...como \*encuentramos por \*un accidente for por casualidad

Also : \*ese es\*el parte\*me\*gusté el más

### Section III - Reading Comprehension

This section tested candidates’ ability to read and comprehend a short passage in the target language. The questions on the passage and the candidates’ answers were in English.

Candidates appeared not to have practised this type of question enough in order to develop the skills required to gain optimum marks. Performance was satisfactory on this section (a mean of 7.09 out of a maximum 15 marks). Weaker candidates made up a story around the few words which they understood.

The better candidates may have understood the passage but in many instances, they failed to answer fully or express this understanding well enough.

#### Question 1

Some candidates interpreted “what happened” to refer to Fernando throwing the glass at the mirror.

#### Question 2

Some candidates failed to mention Fernando being afraid when he saw himself in the mirror. Many of them also interpreted ‘vaso’ as vase.

#### Question 3

Many candidates failed to mention that Fernando was burnt by the hot coffee.

#### Question 4

Most candidates answered this question correctly.

#### Question 5

Most candidates answered “black pants” correctly, but failed to interpret “abrigo de color oscuro” correctly. Some interpreted it as “top/vest/sweater”.

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### Question 6

The majority of candidates were unable to correctly interpret “agarrar”. Some candidates felt that Fernando was going to run down the thief “with the car”.

### Question 7

Many candidates performed well on this question and mentioned the wife as being “the thief that he was about to hit”.

### **Section IV—Expanded Paragraph**

This section tested candidates’ ability to use written cues to produce a continuous and coherent paragraph of 80-100 words.

The performance of candidates in this section varied from excellent to poor, with a mean score of 9.62 out of a possible 20. Some candidates produced paragraphs written in a logical manner. They used all the cues given and marked transitions with suitable link words. They also used appropriate vocabulary and idioms and showed mastery in the use of the structures they chose. Many of them satisfied the rubric with regard to length of answer.

However, there were those candidates who reproduced the phrases exactly as written in the cues; for example, - “*los animales capturados*” instead of “*los animales fueron capturados.*” Some words such as ‘*jaula*’ and ‘*lucha*’ seemed unfamiliar to many candidates.

There was no widespread use of idiomatic expressions except by the superior candidates.

### **Points to watch:**

- Candidates must be careful to keep within the length stipulated (80-100 words) for the expanded paragraph. Candidates must not write an introduction to their paragraph, before beginning to use the cues, as they squander in this way, some of the words at their disposal. Candidates who do this find themselves unable to include all the cues, because of their long preamble, and are penalized for failing to complete their paragraph or include all the cues within the stipulated length.
- Candidates must try not to introduce unnecessary errors into their work by copying carelessly words that have been supplied to them in the cues.

### Paper 03 - Oral Examination

This paper tested candidates' ability a) to read aloud a short passage in the target language; b) to produce appropriate responses in the target language in a number of simulations; and c) to respond in the target language to general questions based on 3 out of 6 topics indicated in the syllabus.

#### Section 1 – Reading

Performance in the oral examination ranged from excellent to poor. Excellent candidates paid attention to pronunciation, stress and intonation. They were fluent in their delivery of the passage and produced little or no staccato renditions. Weaker candidates disconnected words from phrases, displaying a lack of comprehension.

Problems with consonants:

The consonant “g” presented problems to a number of candidates especially in “ge” and “gi”, as in “*elegir*” and “*escoger*”.

There were difficulties with stress; candidates stressed the last syllable of the verbs conjugated in the third person plural:

*Interesar - interesán\**

*Incluir - incluyén\**

*Ofrecer - ofrecén\**

*Comenzar - comienzán\**

*Guardar - guardán\**

Other errors included the following:

Agreement of nouns and adjectives

Agreement of subject and verb

Omission of the ‘personal a’

Idioms with ‘*tener*’

Use of ‘*bien*’ for ‘*bueno*’ and vice versa

Confusion of the command form

Problems with vowels:

Some vowels proved difficult for candidates to distinguish and the pronunciation of these vowels was interchanged. ‘*Elaborada*’ became ‘*alaborada*’, and ‘*adolescente*’ became ‘*adolayscente*’.

Some candidates experienced difficulty with words such as:

*fallecimientos*

*involucrarse*

*diversidad*

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*tecnología*  
*contemporáneo*  
*exquisita*

## **Section 2 – Responses to Situations**

This section was generally well done. Candidates responded appropriately although there were the few who used 2nd person singular when they should have used 1<sup>st</sup> person.

Some of the common grammatical errors in this section were:

*Gracias para*  
*Una otra*  
*Mi prefiero*  
*Yo prefiero*  
*Me vestó*

A few candidates seemed to lack the relevant vocabulary to answer the situations suitably. Some situations were also misinterpreted so that the candidates' answers were inappropriate. Other candidates were unable to use commands and subjunctives in their responses. There were also problems with 'ser' and 'estar' and the demonstrative adjective.

Generally, there were appropriate responses, and fluency was, for the most part, satisfactory.

## **Section 3 – Guided Conversation**

While most candidates seemed to understand the questions, some of them lacked the spontaneity and fluency expected at this level. Some candidates showed a lack of command of vocabulary, for example, 'nuevas' for 'noticias' – 'miramos las nuoveas'.

Other candidates misunderstood the questions asked and gave inappropriate responses.

The questions on the topics 'Shopping' and 'Sports' were well done. The ability to change to 1<sup>st</sup> person answer form was satisfactory.

However, there were some notable grammar mistakes such as:

*En los sábados\**

Some candidates experienced difficulty negotiating the meaning of some questions and even words such as:

*¿Cuándo? / ¿Dónde? / ¿Cómo?*

Overall, pronunciation was satisfactory.

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