

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
JANUARY 2008**

SPANISH

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GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

JANUARY 2008

GENERAL COMMENTS

There were varying levels of performance ranging from excellent to poor with the overall performance being comparable to 2007. Several candidates demonstrated high levels of linguistic competence, spontaneity, fluency and accuracy.

It is important for candidates to be exposed to as many real-life situations as possible. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative and creative in teaching their students the difficult aspects of the language. Learning through dramatization, simulation and other fun-filled activities facilitates much retention and the development of communicative and other skills. Visits to Spanish-speaking countries and weekend intensive practice sessions could be organized by teachers.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprises two sections, tests 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 require candidates to have sufficient mastery of essential grammar and vocabulary.

The overall performance on this paper was satisfactory. The main difficulties candidates seemed to face were related to vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. Words such as *enfadada*, *casamiento*, *periódico*, *revista*, *deportivo* proved challenging. Candidates should be taught how to recognize cognates and use them to guide comprehension. *Eufórica*, should have been associated with euphoric. Additionally, candidates should be guided to make connections between different words. For instance, students know *casarse*, the verb. Hence, *casamiento* should have been easy to understand.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section I – Directed Situations

This question demands that candidates identify the function for which the situation forms the context, and demonstrate their control of appropriate grammatical structures and knowledge of relevant vocabulary in clearly worded, concise responses. The better candidates were able to satisfy these requirements. Candidates' performance on the whole ranged from outstanding to occasions when no attempt was made to answer the questions in the section.

Candidates are reminded that they must relate their responses to the situation provided. There is a tendency for candidates to write general responses which do not fulfil a FUNCTION which relates to the specific situation given.

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

Situation 1

You are going out with friends but would like your brother to collect you at a specific time and place. Write the note you leave him.

The majority of candidates tended to omit the first part of the rubric “collecting the person.” In some cases, the verb *coleccionar* was used and those who attempted to use the verb *venir*, used *para* instead of *por* for “come for me.”

Situation 2

Send an email to a friend giving details of an end-of-year activity at your school.

Candidates who attempted to use the future tense used it incorrectly in many instances. There were also candidates who used the words *haber* or *hacer*, instead of *tener*. ‘A’ was also frequently used instead of ‘en’.

Situation 3

You have been given an assignment but do not understand the task. Write the email you send to your teacher requesting assistance.

Many candidates simply stated that the task was difficult, but did not **request assistance**, which is what they were required to do. The familiar form *tú* was frequently used even though candidates were speaking to their teachers. Additionally *asistir* was repeatedly used in place of *ayudar*.

Situation 4

You have applied for a job but have not received any response. Send an email to the manager expressing your concern.

Many candidates did not perform the function of stating/expressing concern. They wrote very general answers and in some cases even lifted sections of the comprehension.

Situation 5

Your parents are reluctant to buy you an article which you really want. Write the note you leave in which you make a promise to them if they purchase the article for you.

This was fairly well done although in some cases, candidates wrote **promio*, or **promito* for *prometo*.

Situation 6

Your friend has been hospitalized after being involved in an accident. Write the note you send expressing your regret.

Several candidates simply wrote *lo siento* without reason. Many of those who used *siento que*, failed to use the subjunctive.

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Situation 7

You go with friends to the cinema, but are met with a notice stating that the film you wanted to see is not being shown. Write the note which explains when and at what time the film will be shown.

The writing of both the date and time proved problematic for many candidates. Common errors were *en* – **en el jueves* and *son* – **a son las doce*.

Situation 8

You are shopping and go to the section where you know your favourite food is kept. However, you find the shelves empty and a notice informing customers of a problem with the item. What does the notice say?

Many candidates incorrectly used the word *mimado* for spoilt. They must be reminded that this is usually used with children.

Situation 9

Your sister has just bought a new book. Write the note of advice she has placed in it.

Many candidates misunderstood this situation and described the book without giving advice. Other candidates provided advice, but did not relate it to the book. General advice such as *¡Cuidado!* was not appropriate. *¡No toques mi libro!* would have been better advice.

Situation 10

Write a note expressing good wishes to your friend who is about to participate in a competition.

Several candidates offered congratulations instead of good wishes before the person had participated in the competition.

Section II – Letter/Composition

This section is intended to assess the candidates' ability to produce written language within the parameters set out by the syllabus. In addition to mastery of relevant vocabulary, idiom and language structure, the ability to express ideas clearly and coherently is emphasized. The two options given were the letter and the composition, each of which was marked out of 30.

In general, the performance on this question was satisfactory. The essays and letters showed that the writing skill needs to be given more attention. Fairly good scripts showed good structures, idiomatic expressions and attempts to use the subjunctive accurately.

Weaker scripts revealed the following:

- Lack of vocabulary

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- Frequent errors of grammar
 - poor use of pronouns, for example, *No puedo ir con tú**
 - expressing sorrow – *estoy mucho lo siento*
 - confusion – *y lavar* and *levantar*, for example, *levantaré la ropa*
 - problems with ‘*ser*’ and ‘*estar*’
 - problems of agreement – *la comida y la música es muy bien**

A few scripts were incoherent as candidates just wrote words in any order and without any consideration for how language functions.

Candidates could be helped by exposing them to more written Spanish. In other words, they should read more and practise writing short prose pieces more frequently. A good knowledge of vocabulary is indispensable to this exercise.

Section III – Contextual Announcement/Contextual Dialogue

This section was first tested in the May/June 2007 examination. It requires candidates to choose either to write (i) a Contextual Announcement or (ii) a Contextual Dialogue Completion. Cues given in English are provided for both options.

Most candidates chose the Dialogue Completion, but few of them used the opportunity to use language creatively and innovatively. The use of language showed basic structures, and copying from the comprehension. Candidates should be cautioned about taking entire passages from the comprehension without relating them to the context given.

Candidates need to be guided to write the Contextual Announcement either as a continuous paragraph or in bulleted format. Either way all the cues need to be included.

The majority of candidates’ performed satisfactorily. A small percentage achieved superior performance.

Candidates must be reminded of the need to establish register – formal or informal – *tú* or *Ud*, based on the context provided.

Section IV - Reading Comprehension

The performance on this section was good. Most candidates attempted this section and in general, demonstrated good comprehension of the passage. The main problem identified with candidates’ responses is their difficulty with English. When candidates cannot express themselves in English, the meaning they want to communicate can become distorted. While candidates are not penalized for English grammar, they need to use language clearly and effectively. Some vocabulary problems were also evident as candidates often translated *mujer* as “manager”, *presentarse* as “to present” and *ísimo* at the end of *contento* was misunderstood by some candidates, so that “very happy” was understood only as “happy”.

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Responses to Questions

Question 1

What had Ramón just completed?

Some candidates wrote that Ramón completed his exams leaving out the fact that they were his final examinations.

Question 2

What was he concerned about?

Most candidates emphasized Ramón's finding a job, while the question was about what he was going to do after he graduated.

Question 3

To whom did he write?

The majority of candidates responded accurately to this question.

Question 4

Why was Ramón disappointed?

Candidates focused on how Ramón had studied hard but was unable to find a job.

Question 5

What career did Ramón wanted to pursue?

The word *abogado* was interpreted as banker, business man, accountant, school.

Question 6

Who finally telephoned him?

Many candidates did not state specifically that a woman from the bank called. They simply said the bank called.

Question 7

What information did Ramón receive via the telephone call?

Most candidates mentioned 'interview' but did not state that the interview would be on the following day. Some candidates who did not understand presentarse wrote that he had to make a presentation.

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Question 8

How did he react to the information he received?

Contentísimo was interpreted as simply 'happy'. A few candidates said that he celebrated.

Question 9

With whom did Ramón share the good news?

Most candidates responded appropriately. A few wrote 'father', instead of 'parents', for *padres*.

Question 10

Explain why there was a feeling of anxiety among everyone.

Most candidates answered appropriately. However, some did not understand 'anxiety'.

Paper 03 – Oral Examination

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

Section I - Responses to Situations

This section was, for the most part, well done. A few candidates showed a lack of understanding, while others seemed to lack the appropriate vocabulary or were unable to express themselves fluently. As a result, their responses were halting, limited and jerky. The more competent candidates, however, demonstrated a greater degree of confidence and correctness of expressions.

Some of the common problems demonstrated by candidates included:

- Difficulty expressing requests
- Incorrect formation of the imperative
- Incorrect formation of the future
- Confusion of "tú" and "Ud"
- Misrepresentation of some situations
- Incorrect use of direct and indirect object pronouns
- The subjunctive mood

Section II - Reading Aloud

For the most part, this section was well done. A few candidates had problems with intonation, fluency, stress and vowel sounds.

Main challenges faced by candidates were:

- Incorrect pronunciation of consonants - j, ll, - *jamaicanos*, *tejidos*, *llegó*

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- Mispronunciation of vowel sounds in cognates such as:

<i>cultural</i>	<i>c<u>o</u>ltural*</i>
<i>multicolores</i>	<i>m-<u>o</u>lticolores*</i>
<i>procede</i>	<i>proc<u>i</u>de*</i>
<i>celebra</i>	<i>cel<u>i</u>bra*</i>

- Some cognates were completely mispronounced, for example, *mayo*, *ingredientes*, *colonización*

These were anglicized.

- Diphthongs were not properly pronounced

<i>Dieciocho</i>	<i>dicio<u>i</u>cho</i>
<i>Bautizo</i>	<i>bautiz<u>o</u>* </i>
<i>Riquezas</i>	often pronounced with an English Z sound.
<i>Territorio</i>	pronounced <i>ter<u>i</u>torio</i>

- Words with accents were stressed on the wrong syllables

<i>*práctica</i>	was rendered as <i>pract<u>i</u>ca</i>
<i>*tomándola</i>	was rendered as <i>tomand<u>o</u>la</i>
<i>*foàaneos</i>	was rendered as <i>foran<u>e</u>os</i>
<i>*significa</i>	<i>sign<u>i</u>fica</i>
<i>*encontró</i>	<i>en<u>c</u>ontro</i>

- Vowel sounds were mispronounced. For example, *uropeos* was rendered as “urupios”.

Section III - Guided Conversation

Performance on this section ranged from excellent to weak. It was evident from their performance that some candidates had not been adequately prepared for this examination. They showed little knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, did not understand the questions and lacked fluency. Some candidates lacked the confidence to supply meaningful answers.

The main grammatical problems candidates displayed in this section included errors of verb form, incorrect word order and problems expressing time.

Other problems included:

*Confusion of ‘*por*’ and ‘*para*’

* ‘*Ser*’ and ‘*estar*’

*Use of infinitives instead of conjugated verb forms

*Agreement of subject and verb

*Expressing the time at which something is/was done: *¿A qué hora te levantas?*

*A son las seis**

or

*Son las seis**

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