

**C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L**

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE  
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE<sup>®</sup> EXAMINATION**

**MAY/JUNE 2012**

**SPANISH**

**GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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## GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' overall performance in the 2012 examination was similar to that of 2011. The performance on the three papers and on the profiles closely resembled what obtained in the previous year.

## DETAILED COMMENTS

### Paper 01 — Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprised two sections, assessed candidates' ability to (i) listen to and understand a number of items in the target language and (ii) read and understand a number of written items. Both sections required candidates to demonstrate a mastery of essential elements of grammar as prescribed in the CSEC syllabus and to use vocabulary appropriate to this level of competence. The performance on this paper was comparable with that of previous years.

### Paper 02 — Free Response

#### Section I (Question 1) — Directed Situations

In this section, candidates were presented with ten situations, in English, to which they were required to provide written responses in Spanish. The situations demanded that candidates recognize the function they were required to perform, using vocabulary and structures expected of candidates who have undergone five years of study. Candidates were assessed on the appropriateness of their responses and the quality of language used. Inappropriate responses were awarded no mark, even if the quality of language was perfect.

#### Situation (a)

You have been asked to nominate a class prefect. Give two reasons why you have nominated him/her. (Function: Giving reasons)

Suggested response: *Porque es organizada y responsable.*

Most candidates were able to respond appropriately. The following were noted:

- Errors in spelling especially of *inteligente, responsable, simpático, atractivo*.
- Candidates failed to change *y* to *e* before *inteligente*.
- Use of *está* instead of *es* with adjectives of personality.
- Absence of personal *a* — *he nominado \*Andre*.
- Spelling of *porque* as *por qué*.
- Errors in subject/adjective agreement — *ella es muy simpático*.
- Use of *Yo* with *me gusta*.
- Incorrect placement of adjectives and omission of indefinite article — *Ella es \*muy interesante persona*.

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Situation (b)

You have just finished reading a book. Write two things you like about this book. (Function: Expressing reason)

Suggested response: *Me gustó el libro porque es interesante y el escritor escribe muy bien.*

Many candidates responded appropriately. Noted were:

- Errors of spelling especially of *interesante* rendered frequently as *interestante/interessante*.
- *Bien* used instead of *bueno* and *bajo* used instead of *corto*.
- Use of adjectives inappropriate for a book which led to marks being awarded for a partial response, for example, *es simpático*.
- Candidates failed to change *y* to *e* before *interesante* or *informativo*.
- Many candidates did not know the word for “novel”, thus *libre* was used instead of *libro*.

Situation (c)

Your Mexican friend is impressed with the quality of your Spanish. Inform him/her in an email of two things that you do to improve your skills in Spanish. (Function: Providing information)

Suggested response: *Charlo por Internet y leo muchas revistas en español.*

This question posed little difficulty and was attempted by the majority of candidates. Noted were:

- Use of the infinitive with *yo* to denote the present tense — *\*yo leer/\*yo ver*.
- Errors in the spelling of *leo* rendered frequently as *leyo*.
- Lack of agreement and incorrect placement of adjectives — *español libros/español cine*.
- Incorrect expression — *música de español*.
- Use of *me* instead of *yo* — *me estudio y practico mucho*.
- *La cuenta* used to mean “story”.
- Use of the preposition *a* after *práctico* to introduce an infinitive.
- Incorrect spelling of *español* and *programas*.
- Incorrect use of *a* with the following expressions — *escucho a música/miro a televisión*.
- Use of *más* to mean *mucho* — *leo más libros*.

Situation (d)

You are compiling a booklet with rules and regulations for your Spanish club. Write two rules which members must follow. (Function: Giving instructions)

Suggested response: *(Hay que) asistir a todas las reuniones y firmar el registro.*

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For many candidates this situation proved to be challenging and many made errors because of their inability to express commands. Most outstanding errors were:

- Use of the gerund for the imperative — *No hablando en inglés. No comiendo y bebiendo.*
- Use of positive form of the imperative to express negative commands — *No habla inglés.*
- Club was spelt as *clube/clubo.*
- Incorrect use of *deber de* + infinitive to mean “one must do something”.

#### Situation (e)

You were invited to a classmate’s party but unfortunately you cannot attend. Write an email to your classmate explaining this and giving a reason. (Function: Giving an explanation and a reason)

Suggested response: *Lo siento/No puedo asistir porque estoy enfermo.*

This suggested response proved to be a popular one, with most candidates scoring full marks. Some failed to explain and only gave a reason while other weaker candidates explained or apologized without giving a reason, thus scoring partial marks. Errors noted were:

- Incorrect spelling of *asistir/atender*. Omission of *a* after *asistir*.
- Use of *partido* for “party” instead of *fiesta*.
- Inappropriate use of *es* instead of *está* to express illness.
- Incorrect expression — *No puede* to mean “I can’t”.
- Noun/adjective agreement — *Mi mamá está enfermo.*
- Failure to place accents on *esta* and *mama*.
- Incorrect use of *lo siento* followed by *por ..../que .....*
- Incorrect use of *pero* to mean *porque*.

#### Situation (f)

You are unable to write an examination today. Write a note to your teacher seeking permission to make another arrangement to write the examination.

(Function: Seeking permission and making an arrangement)

Suggested response: *Profesor, ¿sera posible presentarme al examen el 30 de junio?*

Many candidates ignored the element of seeking permission and informed the teacher of another arrangement, thus obtaining partial marks. Others apologized and gave reasons for being unable to do the exam. Most common errors noted were:

- Inability to express examination — *examinación* was quite popular.

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- Incorrect spelling of *examen* as *examine*.
- Incorrect spelling of *profesor/profesora* and *acer* for *hacer*.
- Incorrect expressions — *¿puedo escribo el examen mañana por favor?/Yo escribe ...*
- Use of *pasado* to mean *próximo*.
- Incorrect use of *el/un* before *otro día*
- Use of *en* with days of the week.

#### Situation (g)

You are at a wedding that your friend could not attend. Send him/her a text message describing something that attracted your attention at the wedding.

(Function: Mentioning and describing something)

Suggested response: *El vestido de la novia es/era muy bonito.*

Many candidates were not able to score full marks because they mentioned what attracted their attention without describing it. For others, vocabulary seemed to be quite challenging as they could not express bride/groom or items of clothing correctly. The following errors were noted:

- Noun/adjective agreement — *el vestido es bonita/La torta es bonito.*
- Incorrect article — *los flores*. Spelling of *flores* as *floras*.
- Incorrect vocabulary — *vestida* to mean “dress”.
- Inability to express possession. Use of the English structure and *s* instead of using *de*.
- Incorrect spelling of *iglesia*.
- Incorrect use of *a* instead of ‘*en*’ — *a la boda*.

#### Situation (h)

You are planning to go out with your best friend and your mother is not at home. Write the note you leave for her letting her know of your intention and the reason for going out.

(Function: Expressing intention and reason)

Suggested response: *Voy/Fui/Iré al cine porque quiero ver esa película.*

Most candidates were able to state where they went, but did not give a reason and thus only scored partial marks. For the better candidates this situation posed little difficulty. Errors noted were:

- Inability to form the tenses of the verb *ir* correctly — *soy voy/soy irando/soy yendo/mi amigo y yo fuemos/Mi y mi amigo fueron*.
- Omission of *que* with *tener* to express “to have to do something”.
- Incorrect expression *a el* — *Voy a el cine con Joy...*

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- Incorrect article — *la cine/la hospital/el playa*
- Use of *lo* as a subject pronoun and *ella* as a possessive adjective — *porque lo es ella cumpleaños*.
- Omission of personal *a* with *visitar* and a person and the use of *a* with *visitar* and a place.
- Incorrect spelling of *centro comercial*.

Situation (i)

Someone has prepared you for your English examination and you did very well on it. Send a thank you note to him/her, mentioning one thing that was of help to you.

(Function: Expressing gratitude for something)

Suggested response: *Muchas gracias por la práctica con los ensayos.*

Many candidates were not able to score full marks because they left out the element of the one thing that was of help. Others were unable to express themselves in Spanish so English was used — the preterite tense. Other errors noted were:

- Incorrect spelling of *gracias*.
- Incorrect use of *para* instead of *por* after *gracias*.
- Incorrect use of the gerund instead of the infinitive to express “helping me” — *por ayudándome*.
- Incorrect placement of the object pronoun *me* with *ayudar* — *las palabras ayudenme/El vocabulario ayudame*.
- Incorrect use of the familiar form to address the teacher — *Señor, tu vocabulario me ayuda*.
- Omission of *a* after *ayudar* with an infinitive.

Situation (j)

You are having difficulty studying and have visited the school’s counsellor for advice. Write two things that he/she suggests that you do. (Function: Suggesting /advising)

Suggested response: *Debes tomar un descanso después de la escuela y tratar de estudiar con un amigo a veces.*

This situation proved to be a bit challenging for those candidates who were unable to express suggestions/make recommendations or give commands. Errors noted were:

- Incorrect use of *deber* followed by *de* with the infinitive.
- Incorrect formation of the commands — present tense was used for both positive and negative commands. Infinitives were also used here.
- Inability to produce a suggestion using the subjunctive – *Sugiero que estudias/comes ...*

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- Literal translations showing great influence of the mother tongue and lack of appropriate vocabulary —*Hacer a estudiar tiempo mesa/Tomar romper todos ahora.*

### **Further Comments and Recommendations**

The situations were straightforward and did not leave much room for the candidates to misinterpret or stray from the point. Generally, the majority of candidates interpreted the questions correctly. The grammatical structures and vocabulary required were well within the reach of the majority of the candidates. However, candidates must pay closer attention to spelling, especially with regard to the use of accents. The omission of accents on key words resulted in a loss of marks. Some notable omissions were on the following — *mama, papa, mas, tu, esta, espanol, manana, senor, senorita*. Also, more attention needs to be paid to the use of accents with the verb tenses which differentiate between present and preterite tenses.

It is also important that candidates recognize that double “s”, “t”, “m” among others, are not used in Spanish. There were too many instances where well known words such as *clase, profesor, atender, comercial* were rendered incorrectly.

Some weaker candidates continued to translate very literally, thus showing their lack of knowledge of parts of speech and the way words function in a sentence, producing some responses which are practically unintelligible to a native speaker. Some examples follow:

- *Lo siento mucho pero \*me no attendir course mi mama se no.*
- *\*No uno es beber aquí.*
- *\*Hacer un mesa de estudiar hora.*

Teachers should advise students to look for the distinct functions/notions required of them in the Directed Situations. Candidates should provide responses that address the full requirements of the question in order to access the full range of marks.

### **Section II (Question 2/Question 3) — Letter/Composition**

This section assessed candidates’ ability to produce a piece of Spanish of about 130–150 words based on an outline given in English. Candidates had the choice of producing either a letter or a composition. The demands of this question were within the requirements laid out by the syllabus and in the range of ability expected for candidates at this level.

While both questions were based on experiences familiar to students, most candidates opted to attempt the letter. Both questions demanded the use of more than one tense as well as the use of high frequency vocabulary items, thus testing the ability of candidates to be creative in their expression while using language which they would have practised over the years. The content of most letters and essays was related to zoos, parks, the beach, birthday parties, mountains and botanical gardens.

#### Strengths of Candidates

The majority of candidates attempted the questions and interpreted them well. There were fewer candidates who provided no response or very limited responses, and this may be attributed to practice in writing using a variety of past topics.

Most of the candidates who attempted the letter provided appropriate expressions for the format, especially the expressions which required the subjunctive, although it was quite clear that some

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candidates had learnt set pieces by heart. Some examples of the very good introductory lines of the letter included:

- *Espero que tengas buena salud*
- *Espero que estés bien*
- *Gracias por la carta y el regalo que tú me mandaste*
- *Tanto tiempo que no te veo*
- *Estoy escribiendo para decirte...*

Many candidates displayed very creative approaches to the questions and used a good and wide range of vocabulary and idiom. Some examples of outstanding expression included:

- *Ir al grano*
- *Estar de luto*
- *Díos mediante*
- *En un dos por tres*
- *Prender el fuego*
- *Espero que la justicia tome medidas para resolver...*
- *Espero que la muerte de mi hermana no quede impune*
- *Convertir en trizas*
- *Acaparar mi atención*
- *Desaparecer de la faz de la tierra*
- *No pude dar crédito a los ojos*

### Weaknesses of Candidates

There were many candidates who did not address all the points as required in the rubric. Also, some candidates disregarded the instructions for the number of words by writing too long or too short a response. Several candidates attempted to circumvent the maximum amount of words required by expressing their final thought(s) in an extremely long final sentence. On the other hand, the weaker candidates seemed to list words extensively, perhaps in an effort to reach the minimum number of words.

Although some candidates were commended for the superb openings and endings of the letter, the quality of Spanish degenerated as the writing continued. Some common errors in grammar noted included the following:

- *en* preceding *el* to express the date or prior to a day of the week; for example, *Era \*en el 10 de marzo, en sábado*
- Inclusion of *el* to express date in isolation
- Incorrect use of the subjunctive or the failure to use it

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- *Gente, familia, toda la clase* accompanied by plural verbs/adjectives
- Pluralizing of words such as *gente, ropa*
- Failure to contract *a + el* and *de + el*
- Incorrect positioning of object pronouns
- Omission of the personal *a*
- Incorrect use of the verb *gustar* as seen in the preponderance of *yo gusto, yo guste/gustaba*
- *Ir en un viaje* instead of *ir de viaje*; for example, *Yo fui en un viaje*
- *A* instead of *en* when referring to location; for example, *estaba a la fiesta/a la playa/al centro comercial*
- Problems with *ser* and *estar* — *estaba un gran día, ese día estaba excelente, estuvo el ocho de febrero, estaba la mejor experiencia de mi vida*
- Incorrect adjective used with *estar*, thus causing an unintentional change in meaning
- Use of *por* and *para* — *fui para dos días, gracias para tu regalo*
- Use of *nos* as a prepositional pronoun; for example, *para nos*
- Failure to use the subjunctive; for example, *Espero que te diviertaste*
- Preterite vs Imperfect Tenses

Vocabulary errors included:

- *Aprender* used instead of *Enseñar*
- *Tocar* used instead of *Tomar*
- *Saber* used instead of *Conocer*
- *Emocionado* used instead of *Emocionante*
- *Muy* used instead of *Mucho*
- *Sorprendido* used instead of *Sorprendiente*
- *Poder* used instead of *Saber*
- *Divertido* used instead of *Diversión*
- *Amar* used instead of *Encantar* or *Gustar*
- *Mirar* used instead of *Cuidar a*
- *Parientes* used instead of *Padres*
- *Tener un buen tiempo* used instead of *Divertirse/disfrutar de*
- *Pagar atención* used instead of *prestar atención*
- *Tiempo* used instead of *Vez /Hora*

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In addition to the several errors in grammar and vocabulary, there was a prevalence of spelling errors. Examples included:

- *Apprender (aprender)*
- *Famila (familia)*
- *Quierdo/a (querido/a)*
- *Interestante (interesante)*
- *Classe (clase)*
- *Occurrir (ocurrir)*
- *Immediatamente (inmediatamente)*
- *Experencia (experiencia)*
- *Major (mayor)*
- *Luego (luego)*
- *Intelligente (inteligente)*

### **Further Comments and Recommendations**

Inaccurate grammar and vocabulary continued to diminish the quality of work that candidates produced. Again teachers are urged to dedicate time to expose students to authentic material, to ensure that students acquire a solid command of the essential elements of grammar through constant practice, drills, and a variety of exercises like puzzles, games requiring grammar and vocabulary recognition. Students should be exposed to interesting topics and activities. This may mean that teachers will have to be innovative in their approach to teaching, and create their own resources or source them via the Internet and or “youtube”. There are useful websites that teachers/students could visit to aid in teaching and learning. These include [www.quia.com](http://www.quia.com).

Candidates are again reminded of the importance of observing the rubric. They must focus on the topic outline and address all the points given when developing the letter or composition.

Candidates should never underestimate the importance of accents. Failure to place an accent where required, may change the meaning of a word, and carries a penalty. Candidates could also enhance the quality of their work produced by using proper punctuation.

Candidates should desist from lifting sections from the comprehension passage and reproducing these as their response. There are penalties for plagiarism and this practice should be stopped. Also, candidates must discontinue the practice of using obscenities or offensive language in their responses.

### **Section III (Question 4/Question 5) — Contextual Announcement/Contextual Dialogue**

This section required candidates to choose to complete either (i) a contextual announcement or (ii) a contextual dialogue. Cues were given in English for both options and candidates were to write between 80 and 100 words to complete their responses.

Both the contextual announcement and the contextual dialogue had similar levels of difficulty. However, the contextual announcement allowed candidates the freedom of expression whereas the contextual dialogue guided them to utilize certain vocabulary and structures.

It was observed that most candidates selected the contextual dialogue which presented a more realistic life experience for the candidate considering it dealt with a common school situation — being sick and unable to attend school and it offered cues in Spanish that could help guide responses.

#### Development of Ideas and Responses:

This was generally satisfactory. Some candidates showed creativity in their responses and there was a greater attempt to develop the cues into an announcement, rather than an advertisement/ poster presented in point form. There were, however, a few instances where the responses were isolated, or reflected a different topic which seemed to have been learnt previously.

The overall performance of the candidates fell within the categories; Fairly Good and Good. The majority who completed the contextual dialogue, displayed wider knowledge of the vocabulary and structures that were required to successfully complete this question. As such, the scores were higher than those of the contextual announcement.

#### Contextual Announcement

Candidates who selected the contextual announcement showed much less creativity in their responses than in previous years. This was primarily due to a lack of vocabulary. Some used *carta* for *ensayo*; *letras* or *wordos* for *palabras*; *competición*, *competencia*, *contesta* for *concurso*; *entrar* for *participar* and *la línea de muerto* for *límite de tiempo*. Fewer candidates attempted this question and there were generally no exceptionally good responses. There was poor use of correct tense and form, definite and indefinite articles, poor expression of time, poor knowledge of agreement and spelling of numbers, and weakness in writing the date.

Generally, there was improvement in the formation of commands/ the use of the Imperative. However, there was inconsistency in its correct register, and many candidates alternated between the familiar and polite; singular and plural. This difficulty was also noted when candidates attempted to use the correct form of address. For example, they started the announcement using the familiar form, *¿Quieres participar en una competencia?* but at the end the instructions were given in the polite form, *No lo pierdan or Vengan todos*.

Furthermore, candidates had difficulty finding the expressions to state the title of the essay and give information on the types of prizes to be won (Cues 2 and 5).

Other common grammatical errors included the following:

- *una competición de escribiendo* instead of *un concurso de escribir*
- *por estudiantes* instead of *para estudiantes*
- *el tópico* instead of *el tema*
- *estudiantes deben ser 16 años* instead of *los estudiantes deben tener 16 años*
- *submitir* or *dar en* instead of *entregar*
- *lugar* instead of *puesto*

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- *muy* instead of *más*
- *más que* instead of *más de*
- *ese/eso* instead of *que*
- *regalos/prizos/precios* instead of *premios*
- use of *primero* before a masculine singular noun
- *dos ciento palabras* instead of *doscientas palabras*
- *cinco cientos dólares* instead of *quinientos dólares*
- *un mil dólares* instead of *mil dólares*
- *attender* instead of *asistir*
- *por más información* instead of *para más información*
- *por el 3 Junio* instead of *para el 3 de junio*
- *todos estudiantes* instead of *todos los estudiantes*
- *interesantes* instead of *interesados*
- *Estudiantes deben* for *Los estudiantes deben*
- *Solo* instead of *sólo*
- *en el 16 de julio* instead of *el 16 de julio*

However, many candidates also displayed examples of very good writing/vocabulary. Some of these included:

- *basado en el siguiente tema*
- *los ganadores serán anunciados el doce de abril*
- *los que pueden participar son*
- *concurstantes*
- *alardear*
- *ganadores*

### Contextual Dialogue

Candidates responded fairly well to the question since the level of vocabulary and expressions expected from the cues given were within their scope.

The stronger candidates correctly responded to most of the cues and the information provided was appropriate. The cue which was poorly used was the recommendation of the doctor. Many candidates also erred in expressing the nature of the illness as stomach pains — probably through their interpretation of *gripe* as a stomach ailment. In the case where Roberto expressed the wish that his friend would return to school soon, many candidates were unable to write a suitable response which would lead into Roberto's next statement.

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There was excellent usage of grammatical structure and vocabulary. Many candidates managed to respond appropriately to the first three questions although many of them misinterpreted the question, *¿Y qué te dijo?* They indicated what the doctor said to the mother — *No sé mi mamá me llevó.*

In many instances there was no agreement of adjectives/and or articles, and errors in general sentence structure. Some of these instances included *buena amigo* instead of *buen amigo*; *mucha agua/la agua*; *mi cabeza*; *tu es mi amigo mejor*; *Que es muy bien*. Again in this question, candidates used the polite form instead of the familiar form. For example, *¿Puede ayudarme?* Instead of *¿Puedes ayudarme?*

There was greater use of the subjunctive after expressions of future time and in other instances where it was needed. For example, *cuando regrese a la escuela*; *en cuanto que vuelva*; *me dio medicinas para que me mejorara*. There were more attempts at idiomatic use in this question, even though less than in previous years.

The use of idioms added to the improved performances of very good candidates. For example, *¡Qué Dios te escuche!*; *¡Qué guay!*; *¡Qué asco!*; *No aguanto más el dolor*.

The majority of good candidates displayed a greater mastery of the usage of the future and preterite tenses. For example, *Regresaré el lunes*; *estudiaré mis libros*; *el médico me dijo*; *¿Ellos ganaron?*; *Me caí*; *yo fui ayer*; *me lastimé la pierna*. However, candidates did experience difficulty when conjugating the irregular verbs in the future, for example, *hacer* and *tener* posed problems – *haceré* and *teneré* were very evident. In some instances candidates wrote *sabo* instead of *sé*.

There were also instances of misspellings (*bein*, *hugo*, *asiendo*, *imajino*, *cabesa*, *ejercios*, *se* (I know), *trabajando* for *trabajo*). There was frequent omission of the reflexive pronoun *me* from *siento*. Accentuation and pronunciation were problematic and often neglected in even the better scripts.

The following are other examples of errors.

- *Mi duele* instead of *me duele*
- *Frío* instead of *resfriado*
- *Conocer* instead of *saber*
- *Que* instead of *eso*
- *Medico/medicacion /medicando* instead of *medicamento*
- *¿Qué?* instead of *¿Cómo?*

Candidates should be commended for using the following:

- *Entregar*
- *La tos*
- *Atrasarse*
- *La nariz tapada*
- *Use of body parts la garganta/ el pulmón*

Other examples of very good expressions used were

- *mi cara está hinchada*
- *no quiero ser la única retrasada en las tareas*
- *contar con*
- *en cuanto*
- *me dijo que me descansara*

### **Further Comments and Recommendations**

- Teachers should place greater emphasis on the phonetics of the language at an earlier stage of language learning.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the statements before and after each blank space of the dialogue before attempting to fill in a response. This approach will allow for a smooth flow of conversation.
- Candidates should be encouraged to write short, precise statements and or sentences and then gradually expand their ideas for explanatory and descriptive writing.
- Candidates should be encouraged to adhere to the rubric. Some stronger candidates have a tendency to exceed the limit.
- Teachers should revise many simple structures such as dates, numbers, time, reflexive verbs and stem-changing verbs.
- Greater effort should be made to stress the difference between the relative pronoun *que* and the demonstrative *esa/ese* etc.
- There is need for use of sentence / structure/substitution drills so candidates would become accustomed to using many expressions in context.
- Regular / Consistent vocabulary and spelling tests — these should be thematic/ contextual. Teachers should use games and puzzles and creative means to get students to increase their vocabulary.
- Reading/writing everyday announcements of activities and advertisements in the target language would help to develop necessary vocabulary in a number of areas which could provide useful practice for contextual announcements.
- Listening dialogue exercises with a missing conversation piece to be provided by students.
- Candidates need to practise more writing of contextual dialogues. These may also include suggested cues in English, to prompt the students' responses in Spanish.
- Students can create their own dialogues for role play which may be written based on cues given by the teacher, or on a general theme/ topic.
- Dialogue arrangement (from jumbled cues/ an entire jumbled dialogue). This not only facilitates critical thinking but also sequence and coherence of ideas.

### **Section IV (Question 6) — Reading Comprehension**

This section assessed candidates' ability to read and comprehend a short passage in Spanish and respond in English to ten questions set on the passage. The marks allocated ranged from one to three. Generally this question was answered well by the majority of the candidates who were able to read and understand most areas of the passage. There also seemed to be a decrease in the number of candidates who ignored the instructions and answered in Spanish. Candidates are reminded that there is a penalty applied for doing this. The questions asked and the suggested responses are given below.

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Question (a)

How does the author describe her childhood?

There were varied interpretations.

Suggested response: The author describes her childhood as happy and full of worries.

Many candidates found difficulty understanding the word *inquietudes* and felt that it was referring to positive qualities like “peaceful”, and words such as “iniquities” and “inequities”.

Incorrect response: — happy and full of obstacles; happy and full of memories

Question (b)

How many siblings did the author have?

Suggested response: She has none as she is an only child.

Some candidates stated that Sonita had nine siblings. This might have been derived from the word *niñez*. Many candidates did not understand the concept of siblings, and included her mother and father and at times, Sonita herself, as siblings.

Incorrect response: The author had two siblings; her mother and father and Sonita had one sibling.

Question (c)

What did the author appreciate most about her parents?

Suggested response: She appreciated the many presents and the lessons they gave her.

Many candidates used everyday living experiences as a basis for answering this question; stating that the parents were caring, they gave her lots of attention. *Regalos* was frequently interpreted as rules (*reglas*).

While candidates may rely on experiences to help them in answering a question, they must not allow this to distort the context of the passage.

Incorrect response: She liked that they gave her a lot of presents, attention and care.

Question (d)

What did the author find difficult?

Suggested response: She found difficulty confronting her problems alone / by herself.

While many candidates understood the verb *confrontar*, some ignored what followed and stated that “she had difficulty confronting her parents”, “confronting boys”. Others took it to mean “confrontations”.

Incorrect response: She had difficulty confronting her parents alone.

Question (e)

With respect to the specific incident, where were her parents going?

Suggested response: They were going to a concert/theatre/to her university.

Many candidates did not specify that the parents were going to her university, but instead they gave the same response for question (f).

Incorrect response: They were going to Sonita's first year of university.

Question (f)

What was the purpose of the parents visit?

Suggested response: They were going to meet her friends and see her perform at a concert.

A frequent response was: They were going to see Sonita in her first year of university.

Incorrect response: The parents were going to visit friends and attend a concert. / They were going to take Sonita and her friends to a concert.

Question (g)

Where did the author meet her parents?

Suggested response: She met them at the entrance of the theatre.

Candidates had difficulty with the preposition *a*. *A la entrada*, "at the entrance", was noted as, by the entrance, outside the entrance, in front of the entrance.

Question (h)

What did the author notice when her parents arrived?

Suggested response: Her father was wearing mismatched shoes/ two different shoes.

The context of the verb *llevar* was misunderstood. Some interpreted it as, carrying, brought and took, as opposed to wearing + the article of clothing.

Question (i)

Explain how the author reacted after she saw her parents.

Suggested response: She was ashamed and she immediately took her father to the shopping centre to buy a new pair of shoes.

Though *avergonzada* was understood by the majority, some candidates still wrote "shocked", "surprised". This is an example of the lack of understanding of certain items of vocabulary in this question.

The use of the pronoun *lo* (*lo llevé*) proved to be a challenge for some candidates. It was interpreted to mean she took her parents, or, she and her friends went, and not, she took him. *Le* (*comprarle*) was not correctly identified as "to buy him" and was even identified as "the shoes".

*Fuimos al centro comercial* was interpreted to mean, she and her friends, she and her parents. Some candidates had difficulty recognizing the reference to her father.

Incorrect response: She was shocked and horrified and she and her friends went to the commercial centre to buy shoes.

#### Question (j)

What did the author realize from her experience?

Suggested response: The author realized that if she had a brother, he would have corrected/ fixed her father's mistake.

The imperfect subjunctive was not clearly identified by many candidates who interpreted *ojalá hubiera tenido* to mean she wanted to have or she needed to have

Candidates also had difficulty with vocabulary where this question was concerned. Examples of this include *por lo menos* and *darse cuenta de*, where *menos* indicated for them "a younger brother", and *cuenta* gave candidates the idea of a bill being paid.

Incorrect response: She realized her fathers' error. /She realized that her parents left her brother at home and it was his fault/She realized that her father was given the wrong bill.

#### **Further Comments and Recommendations**

- Candidates are urged to write as legibly and as grammatically correct as possible without using local expressions.
- Candidates should skip one line between responses to questions.
- Candidates are asked to identify each question as they answer.
- Teachers should pay special attention to skills that would assist the improvement of literacy. As these strategies are too many to mention here, teachers are strongly advised to visit the suggested websites below for a more detailed description for strategies such as: skimming, scanning, sequencing, deducing meaning in a context.

Suggested websites:

Guidelines for Reading Comprehension

<http://www.tutorvista.com/content/english/english+--ii/reading/reading-comprehension.php#>

Reading – Strategies

<http://www.tutorvista.com/content/english/english-i/reading/reading-strategies.php#>

#### **Paper 03 — Oral Examination**

The oral examination assessed the ability of candidates to: (i) produce appropriate responses in Spanish to a number of situations testing specific functions, (ii) read aloud a short passage in Spanish and (iii) carry on a conversation in the target language by responding to questions based on four out of six topics set out in the syllabus, namely, Home and Family, Daily Routine, Sports and Recreation and Travel.

*An asterisk (\*) indicates an incorrect form, spelling or structure. Two asterisks (\*\*) indicate an omission.*

### Section I – Responses to Situations/Instructions

This section required the candidates to produce appropriate responses in Spanish to situations/instructions described in English in keeping with the function specific to the situation. Performance on this section demonstrated a range of abilities among the candidates. Some candidates performed very well in this section producing responses which were not only appropriate but which were expressed correctly, exhibiting sound grammatical structures, a wide range of vocabulary and ample use of idioms. These candidates delivered their responses with spontaneity, self-confidence and a high degree of fluency.

At the other side of the performance spectrum, many candidates performed poorly in this section. Because of their general weakness in basic grammar and a very restricted vocabulary range, many candidates manifested long delays in producing responses many of which were characterized by short one or two-word answers. Candidates who fell in this category showed absolute ignorance of the usage of Spanish idioms. In many cases where the response was appropriate, the candidates lost marks for correctness of expression. The specific and more common grammatical deficiencies observed include the following:

- Failure to conjugate the verb when necessary.  
— *Yo comprar un libro.*
- Conjugating the verb when the infinitive is needed.  
— *Puedo trabajo mucho.*
- Negatives expressed by putting *no* after the verb.  
— *Mi nombre es no Juan.*
- Improper use of object pronouns.  
— *Por qué no llamaste me?*
- The use of *ser* and *estar*.  
— *Mi mamá es enferma.*
- Failure to use the Subjunctive after *sugerir* and *recomendar*.
- Incorrect position of adjectives.  
— *Usa la roja camisa.*
- Omission of the personal *a*  
— *Puede dar mi hermano el celular.*

Vocabulary errors included:

*Revolver* instead of *volver*

*Haber* instead of *tener*

*Decir* instead of *hablar*

*Borrar* to mean “to borrow”

It should also be noted that some candidates responded to the situations by using reported speech instead of direct speech as required.

*An asterisk (\*) indicates an incorrect form, spelling or structure. Two asterisks (\*\*) indicate an omission.*

## Recommendations

Candidates appear not to be fully aware of the functions they need to know in order to respond to the situations presented. The syllabus is very clear as to the functions which candidates are expected to be able to use to perform well in this section. Teachers are encouraged to develop exercises to adequately afford students the opportunity to practise these functions orally. Practice in responding to situations orally must begin in the early stages in the teaching/learning process and teachers must avoid the tendency to wait until the examination year to expose students to this skill.

### Section II - Reading Passages

This section assessed candidates' ability to read a passage in Spanish (approximately 125–130 words), demonstrating correct pronunciation of discrete sounds, good intonation and fluency. Candidates exhibited a wide range of competencies in this section ranging from excellent to dismally weak. Excellent readers exhibited a solid knowledge of the Spanish sound system, were well acquainted with the rules of stress and accentuation and read with admirable fluency.

Weaker candidates continue to be challenged by the reading component of the oral examination. It is indeed a cause for concern that after being exposed to the language for several years many candidates exhibit ignorance of the fundamentals of the Spanish sound system. Their pronunciation was faulty and anglicized in many cases. It was clear that many candidates completely failed to understand what the passages were about, thus producing very disjointed reading.

The following are some of the problems which candidates presented:

- Failure to distinguish between the vowels *i* and *e*. For example *decir* was pronounced as *dicir*, *categorias* was rendered as *catigorias*.
- Rendition of the aspirated *h* in words like *ha*, *hijo*, *hecho* and *habitantes*.
- The pronunciation of *g* continues to pose difficulties. Many candidates failed to differentiate between *g* before *a*, *o*, and *u* and *g* before *e* and *i*.
- Difficulty in rendering *gue* and *gui* in words like *tortuguitas* and *tortuguero*.
- General problems in placing the stress where it belongs on the word.
- The anglicizing of cognates such as *personalidad*, *extraordinario*, *professional*.
- Diphthongs were generally mispronounced. — *mueren*, *hueco*, *sean*

## Recommendations

It is clear that the deficiencies in reading as outlined above stem from inadequate preparation and practice. Teachers must ensure that the sound system of the language is understood from very early in the learning process. Spanish must be constantly used in the classroom and opportunities must be created for students to produce the language as often as possible.

### Section III – Guided Conversation

This section of the oral examination assessed the ability of the candidates to respond to a number of questions based on four topics. This year the topics on which the candidates were tested were Home and Family, Daily Routine, Sports/Recreation and Travel. Candidates were asked four questions on each of the topics and were assessed on comprehension and spontaneity, fluency and expression.

This section of the oral examination continues to be the most challenging for candidates. Some candidates at the upper end conversed easily and with great accuracy. Their answers to the questions were spontaneous and tended to be extended, demonstrating a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical correctness. However, the vast majority of the candidates struggled with this section, handicapped by a limited vocabulary and poor knowledge of grammatical structures. The constant request by candidates to have the questions repeated was a clear indicator that there was limited comprehension of the questions asked.

The errors in grammar evident in this section were much the same as those mentioned in Section I and included:

- General weakness in the conjugation and appropriate usage of verbs.
- Lack of concord between noun/adjective and subject/verb
- Incorrect use of *ser* and *estar*, *por* and *para*
- Difficulty in using object pronouns

The following are some specific comments on each of the four topics:

#### Home and Family

While answers to the questions on this topic were generally forthcoming, they lacked detail. For example, when candidates were asked to describe a family member, some candidates were content to offer one short sentence using merely one adjective: *Mi madre es estricta*.

A better response to the same question could have been: *Mi hermana es paciente y tranquila. Tambien es traviesa y comica*.

The question *Dime algo que te gusta/no te gusta de tu familia* was very often misunderstood by candidates who thought that the question was asking about someone.

#### Daily Routine

Most of the questions on this topic were easily understood. Questions 7 and 8 posed some difficulty. For question 7, *¿Cómo te preparas para la semana escolar?*, many candidates expounded on what they did in the morning before leaving home for school.

For question 8, *¿Dirías que tu horario diario es difícil o no?*, there was some difficulty understanding what this question meant. Even for those who understood, it was difficult for them to expand on the reason (*¿Por qué/Por qué no?*)

#### Sports and Recreation

It was apparent here that many candidates did not pay attention to the demands of the questions.

*¿Conoces a un deportista famoso?* very often received the response *Mi deportista favorito es .....* or *No tengo un deportista favorito.*

In response to the question *¿Cuándo sales con tus amigos?* many candidates did not pay attention to the interrogative *Cuándo?* and proceeded to give answers like *Vamos al cine.* However, there were some commendable answers to Question 8, *¿Por qué es importante que los jóvenes participen en actividades recreacionales?* Some of the answers included: *Necesitan tener un cuerpo saludable/Para no sufrir el estrés.*

### Travel

Many candidates found the questions on this topic to be most challenging largely because of a lack of vocabulary. They were not familiar with the verb *Quisieras* in Question 2. In addition, Question 4, *¿Qué clase de transporte se usa para viajar al extranjero?* proved problematic as shown in answers like *Primera clase* and *Yo viajo en economía.*

### **Recommendations**

Teachers must ensure that the communicative approach to language be adopted in the classroom. As far as possible use must be made of the target language in the classroom so that students will become comfortable hearing Spanish around them. Extensive use of Spanish in the classroom will not only strengthen students' listening and speaking skills, but will also increase their confidence when communicating in Spanish.