



GCSE Examiners' Report

Spanish
GCSE
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Executive Summary

Candidates have demonstrated that they are familiar with the format of all four units for the 2024 suite of assessments. The vast majority of candidates attempted all questions on all four units and good attempts were made at all question types. On the whole, it was evident that candidates were entered for the appropriate tier. A recurring area for improvement is knowledge of theme-specific vocabulary. Gaps in knowledge affected comprehension marks on the receptive skills of Listening and Reading and on occasion limited candidates' ability to extend their responses and reach the higher mark bands for Speaking and Writing.

Unit 1 - Speaking

Particular attention should be given to the management of speaking assessments. This includes ensuring an appropriate venue within the centre, following the guidance provided on the WJEC website. Additionally, centres should ensure that all documentation, including the set allocation form, should be uploaded to Surpass alongside the recordings for the cohort.

Candidates were well prepared for the role play section at both tiers and tended to respond well to future tense questions but struggled more with past tense responses. An area which needs further practice is that of formulating questions at both tiers. At higher tier, responses must be free of error to gain full marks and so candidates should be reminded not to provide overly long responses as this often leads to error. The Principal Examiner noted an improvement at both tiers in the photocard descriptions and at answering questions linked to the photocard. At both tiers, the sub-sub theme of Social Issues requires more practice. In the conversation section, centres are reminded of the importance of adhering to the timings set out for each section. It is important for candidates to try to extend their responses in order to access higher marks for communication.

Units 2 and 3 – Listening and Reading

Candidates seemed comfortable with the style and nature of the questions. It was pleasing to see that almost all questions were attempted by most students. Many of the marks that were lost were due to lack of detail on the more challenging questions, where candidates gave very short answers. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of writing meaningful answers to avoid ambiguity which can lead to loss of marks. It also pleasing to see that only a very small minority did not follow the rubric and answered in English/Welsh in the section where responses in Spanish were needed. The translation question in unit 3 reading is an area that continues to need practice. A lack of knowledge of some basic vocabulary continues to cause problems for candidates.

Unit 4 – Writing

Candidates seemed generally well prepared for this unit overall, although there were still a minority of candidates this year at foundation tier level that did not attempt some parts of the assessment. Most candidates were able to satisfy the word count at both foundation and higher level. The question titles allowed candidates scope to produce interesting and imaginative work, particularly at the higher level. On the whole, it was evident that candidates were prepared well for the format of this unit of the assessment. To further improve, candidates should focus on acquiring a better knowledge of theme specific vocabulary and basic grammatical structures.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Candidates should be familiar with theme-specific vocabulary	Vocabulary list (Specification) Knowledge Organisers	Vocabulary list in the specification. Revision sheets covering each of the subthemes.
Rubric infringements	Past Papers Mark Schemes	Use past papers as teaching resources and use segments worded in the target language as translation activities.
Increased knowledge of sub themes, in particular, social issues.	Resource WJEC Educational Resources Website	Listening and reading activities on Wales and the World – Social Issues.

SPANISH

GCSE

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UNIT 1 SPEAKING

Overview of the Unit

Unit One requires candidates to communicate orally in Spanish by participating in a role play, a photo card discussion and a conversation. The three broad themes are covered across all of the tasks. This unit assesses mainly speaking but also listening skills in terms of candidates having to respond to questions posed by the teacher.

This is the second year since the pandemic in which candidates were sitting a complete speaking test which includes the photocard description and subsequent questions. In comparison to last summer, there was a huge improvement in the photocard descriptions and attempts at answering questions in the photocard section.

Timings were generally adhered to although some were still over-length at Foundation tier and in some cases the same length as the Higher Tier. It is not helpful for weaker candidates to have such a long speaking test and generally does not improve performance.

It is important also to ensure that a quiet classroom with no background noise is found. The tests were generally well conducted and administered by centres. We recognise the hard work of all teachers in ensuring that the process has run smoothly.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Role Play

Candidates were generally well-prepared for this section and seemed to understand the format. Very few teachers read out the rubric which is correct as this is not needed. It is important that all the reading out of role play numbers is done in Spanish as some are still being read out in English or Welsh. Candidates generally responded well to future tense questions but struggled more to formulate past tense questions and therefore formulated answers by using an infinitive. There were some errors with candidates formulating answers by repeating the *tú* form of the verb in the answer i.e. *¿Te gusta comer? Sí, te gusta.* There was a good understanding of the need to formulate an answer with a verb and this was better than last year. It must be noted that in order to score maximum marks responses must be mostly accurate and must include a verb.

The most challenging part for candidates was formulating a question to ask the teacher. More practice is needed with question formation and learning question key words such as *¿dónde? ¿cuándo? ¿te gusta? ¿a qué hora?* It would be helpful to repeat the seen questions a couple of times before the candidate responds as some teachers didn't appear to realize this is possible but centres must remember not to rephrase or reformulate the questions in any way as this deducts marks and also key vocabulary cannot be given to candidates by the teacher, candidates will not receive marks in such a situation. No marks are awarded for just a *sí* or *no* answer. It is important to note that the language needs to be mostly accurate to obtain full marks and this does also include pronunciation of key vocabulary. It is important that teachers pronounce correctly so that, if language is then repeated, candidates do not lose marks.

Common foundation role play card issues for candidates:

In general, most candidates found the role play 2 on social issues more challenging and centres would benefit from spending longer on this topic, in particular learning key vocabulary on this topic or even having a better understanding of it in English or Welsh first. Also, role play 4 on places of interest is also an issue in terms of having knowledge of places of interest in their area and in Wales so this would benefit from more development in class as some places of interest mentioned were not tourist attractions.

Overview of the 2024 Foundation Tier Role Play cards:

Role Play 1: This role play was well done. Candidates struggled more with task 2 as they found it challenging to think why they need a healthy diet. Some candidates found task 3 challenging as candidates struggled with first person past verb forms and this needs more preparation especially for key verbs such as *jugar, comer, hacer* etc. Candidates did have a good knowledge of healthy food and drink which was encouraging.

Role Play 2: As stated earlier, candidates found this topic area challenging as they needed more ideas on this topic and also more knowledge of key vocabulary. Social issues at this level can be quite widely interpreted such as environmental or health issues in society so the topic is quite broad.

Role Play 3: This topic was handled well and candidates had a good grasp of vocabulary and seemed familiar with discussing issues of social media. Some misunderstood task 5 as they just stated which type of technology they used but not the purpose so *para qué* was not understood well by many candidates.

Role Play 4: There was a slight issue with this role play with the understanding of what would be of interest for a tourist so were not really appropriate answers showing a lack of understanding for task 2. In task 3 there were also issues with what you like about your region so a response such as 'playing football' is not totally relevant here.

Role Play 5: This role play was generally ok although more candidates need to have knowledge of personality/character adjectives. The question in task 4 was an issue also due to this lack of knowledge. In task 3 they mainly mentioned a subject that they learnt at school which was ok but as in other tasks more past tense verbs in the first person are needed.

Role Play 6: The future or conditional needed in the first task was generally produced well but candidates did struggle in task 2 to think of a reason of why they wanted to study there. The rest was handled well and candidates were generally able to form the future tense better than past tenses. However, in task 5 there were some issues with the question about future plans i.e. *¿te gusta el español?* is not a future plan so future meaning was lost in many responses.

Foundation Photocard

In comparison to last summer, candidates produced much more detailed descriptions of the photocard and also incorporated opinion in many cases such as an opinion of the photo. It is important to note that the teachers must not ask additional questions to extend the photocard description and therefore additional responses were not given credit.

It also needs to be noted that information conveyed must be relevant as some candidates went on to a personal description about their life which was not relevant. More candidates attempted the unseen questions this time, we remind you that the teacher examiner may repeat or rephrase the questions, provided that the same meaning is maintained. In some cases, it would be better to pause before asking *¿por qué?* and let the candidates answer the first part of the question first. More basic knowledge of describing the appearance of a person and clothes would help weaker candidates or even the colour or size of items in a photo. It is very important that candidates are able to give a justification for their opinions as this is required in the mark scheme to score more highly. It is also important to develop more extended answers to at least some responses as this is expected at the top of the communication band of the mark scheme.

Foundation Conversation

It is important to reiterate again that this section should only be 3-5 mins long at this tier. It is important to note that, if previous sections have overrun the candidate does need a minimum of 3 mins in this section. Examiners need to be speaking only in Spanish to introduce this task and they must get the candidate to initiate the conversation for part 1. It is also very important that both tasks are of equal length and this needs to be timed carefully. The initiation should ideally be candidates stating some information on the topic as just reading out the topic title is not sufficient.

Candidates were often able to answer most questions but struggled more to change tense when a past or future tense question was asked. It would help candidates to give an opinion and justification whenever possible and especially if spontaneously produced after a factual answer. It is important for candidates to try to extend answers beyond a question-and-answer format in order to score higher marks for communication. It is also good that some candidates vary the opinion language used (*creo que / pienso que / en mi opinion*) as it is effective to vary these wherever possible. Candidates also need to be taught a wider variety of adjectives to give opinions as *interesante, divertido, aburrido* dominated and were repeated a lot.

It is important that, even with candidates who find this task challenging, teachers ask questions in other tenses and these should not be left to the very end of the interaction. Centres are advised to teach a few basic verbs in the preterite *yo* form so that candidates are able to produce conjugations such as *bebí, comí, hice* naturally as many candidates were only able to produce *fui* which does not demonstrate a grasp of the past tense. Also *voy a* and *me gustaría* can be learnt to vary the future meanings expressed.

In this section, as well as the others, repetition of questions is key but it is not advisable to supply key vocabulary as if the candidate then repeats it, this cannot be credited in the same way as if the candidate had produced this language. Open style questions are encouraged as they often invite candidates to form fuller responses as, constructions using *háblame de..., describe..., ¿Qué es lo bueno o lo malo de..?* work well.

It is important to note that at the top of the mark scheme for communication and language, there needs to be some extension to answers and some attempt also at using complex language which could mean subordinate clauses, a wider range of vocabulary or a variation of tense. Very short, simple answers cannot therefore access the full range of marks. Prompting would be helpful to encourage candidates to extend their answers or simply just pausing and allowing them to say more. This was done well by many centres.

Higher Role Play

Many of the general points about this section are covered in the foundation level information but as an important differentiator for higher tier, the response produced must be free of error for a mark of 3 to be awarded and this does also include accurate pronunciation of language. This again highlights the need not to give overly long responses as this leads to error. With overly long responses, teachers need to interject sooner if a correct response has already been given. It is important for centres to try to repeat questions when there has been no response but not to rephrase questions as this penalises candidates. It is also important to slow down delivery of the unseen question, in particular.

Candidates generally need more practice of producing a range of accurate verbs in past and future and also formulation of correct questions needs greater practice rather than just practice of responding to questions. It is the forming of questions which often is challenging but candidates did better this year with responding to the unseen question.

Overview of the 2024 Higher Tier Role Play cards:

Role Play 1: This topic area was handled well by most candidates. The unseen question with *cuándo* needs more practice as it was generally not understood but it is in the syllabus. For task 1 the best answers obtaining more marks were when the response was kept short. *Me gusta porque es divertido*, is fine for 3 marks.

Role Play 2: As stated for foundation tier, this topic area needs more practice in class and in particular more vocabulary coverage. There were some good responses although some repetition of ideas but this was allowed as long as the response was in the appropriate tense and verb form. For task 2 again shorter responses generally picked up more marks as overly long answers led to error which reduced the mark.

Role Play 3: This topic is generally well covered by most centres and there is a good understanding of environmental vocabulary. As in role play 2 there was some repetition of vocabulary and ideas but if expressed in the correct tense and verb form it was allowed, for example *reciclar* being used in task 2 and 3. There were some issues with the pronunciation of Mexico in task 5 as it was very anglicised by some.

Role Play 4: These tasks were well handled in general although many found task 4 more challenging in terms of thinking of a reason. In task 3 some candidates did just state a person i.e. *mi madre*, so centres need to remember the need to answer in complete sentences to obtain full marks. In task 5 the idea of a career plan was not fully grasped so answers such as *¿te gusta tu trabajo /la universidad?* are not able to achieve full marks as it is not a notion of a career plan for the future.

Role Play 5: Candidates are able to handle *querer* with an infinitive well and there were few errors here. Generally future tenses are produced more accurately than past ones. For task 2 shorter responses such as *es importante* do better than longer responses leading to error. In task 3 for full marks candidates must remember the adjectival agreement with *la formación* and this is often missed also with school subjects. For task 5 again the notion of future studies was lost on occasion so *¿te gusta el español?* is not fully relevant for 3 marks. It is important to always remember that the candidate must produce a question form so, *en el futuro...colegio*, apart from not having a verb is not a question form so cannot be rewarded.

Role Play 6: As often occurs, the topic of food and drink is well done by candidates and the vocabulary is well learnt. The past question form was challenging for some candidates and as is the future form used in task 4 but *voy a comer* or *me gustaría* would also be acceptable here in response to this task. For task 2 candidates again need to be aware of not missing adjectival agreements with feminine foods to obtain a mark of 3.

As addressed at foundation tier, teachers must not rephrase questions or carry out any of this section in English or Welsh, but repetition before the candidate responds is fine and, in many cases, very helpful. Delivery needs to be slower for the unseen question but centres generally did this very well. As stated previously, shorter answers with an accurate verb are more successful and teachers should actively practise this in class or stop candidates from producing overly long responses by moving candidates on to the next task.

Higher Photocard

Following on from advice given last year, candidates generally have produced longer responses to the photocard description. Many have incorporated a description of the weather where applicable. Descriptions of physical appearance, clothes and even emotion was well done by many.

Some candidates were able to state where things were located in the photo such as *en el fondo*, *a la derecha*, but more need to do this as these were isolated examples. Although it is important for candidates to give full responses, some information was not relevant as some candidates, for example with photocard 3, went on to develop a description of when they go on holiday or to the beach and their opinions of this. This is not relevant here. It is important that this is not encouraged by the teacher by adding additional questions. The teacher may rephrase the questions, provided that the same meaning is maintained and may also repeat or rephrase questions that the candidate does not understand.

It would be very helpful if in the discussion, the candidates were encouraged to give longer responses as this is needed to attain the top bands for communication. Some candidates provided accurate responses but without any extension so top bands were missed here. It may help for teachers to give candidates sufficient thinking time here.

More complexity is needed for top bands for linguistic knowledge and accuracy and in particular, a wider range of structures and vocabulary rather than just accurate language with little variety. Subordinate clauses are a good example of natural extension and used by some candidates. At the very top band of the mark scheme, answers need detail and this could be simply giving an example in the past or future such as with card 3 *¿qué hiciste recientemente para llevar una vida sana?* a past is needed but candidates could also add information about what they normally do or hope to do soon as long as the main question is answered first. This is more effective if produced unprompted.

Higher Conversation

Some of the more general points have been expressed in the foundation tier information. It is important that centres do not record the speaking tests near to noisy classrooms as this can negatively affect the performance. It is also important to note that all of this section should be conducted in Spanish with the candidate starting the first conversation. This year the performance across both topics was more evenly matched in terms of level and timing. More centres also adhered to timings although quite a few were still over-length which can negatively affect candidates. Centres are reminded that this section should only be 5-7 mins long. If other sections over run, the candidate should be given a minimum of 5 minutes.

It is important that the conversations do not sound over-rehearsed as a natural performance is needed for the top communication band and there were some good examples of natural language when candidates asked a question for the teacher to respond. Ideally to start the first conversation, the candidate should give a little bit of information in Spanish on the topic unprompted rather than just reading out the topic area in Spanish. This is a chance for candidates to really excel and direct the conversation. Asking the teacher a question at this point can also be very effective and natural and should be used more throughout the test for stronger candidates if possible. Developing the ability in candidates to ask questions more would also have a positive effect in the role play section.

It is very important that candidates are asked open questions where the candidate can give a long, detailed answer without any interjection. Stronger performances were often categorized by the teacher speaking very little and allowing the candidate to fully develop answers.

Popular areas for candidates were holidays and tourism, school and college life and food and drink. Local and regional features and characteristics of Spain and the Spanish speaking countries and festivals and celebrations were less popular but mainly due to lack of knowledge about this information rather than the actual Spanish knowledge needed.

In order to achieve top pronunciation marks, it is important to remember that pronunciation needs to sound natural and be accurate but does not need to be at native speaker level. Equally for the linguistic knowledge and accuracy band, excellent language comprises of a wide range of structures and vocabulary, variation of tense i.e. not always using the preterite but spontaneously using the perfect or imperfect, possibly a subjunctive. Subordinate clauses help to achieve longer sequences of language but it is not expected that language is faultless. Some error is expected when using complex features, what matters is that they are attempted and incorporated into the responses.

As stated previously, candidates would benefit from learning the past and future forms of more key verbs so they can be slotted into language more spontaneously and there is a lack of adjectival knowledge even for candidates outside of *aburrido*, *interesante*, *divertido*, and *emocionante* with an over-use of *me gusta*.

There have been examples of a wider range of structures used this year such as *creo que*, *así que*, *dado que*, *parece*, which has been welcomed. However, the range of vocabulary is often times too narrow for what would be expected at the top of the linguistic knowledge range.

With certain candidates it was clear that they were following set questions which may have been part of class/revision material and this was unhelpful if they had not revised this. Adapting and prompting in an attempt to elicit a more basic spontaneous response may generate more marks for these candidates.

Finally, centres could benefit from preparing a few descriptions on certain topics as this would benefit the speaking and writing paper. A brief description on holidays could then be used in the writing paper in some capacity and would therefore save time for teachers and candidates. The link between these two units could be developed more as some of the issues or advice for the speaking paper do benefit the writing paper and vice versa.

SPANISH
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UNIT 2 LISTENING

Overview of the Unit

Overall, candidates seemed comfortable with the style and nature of the questions. It was pleasing to see that almost all questions were attempted by most students. Many of the marks that were lost were due to lack of detail on the more challenging questions, where candidates gave short answers or simply a one-word answer. Teachers should remind their students of the importance of writing meaningful answers to avoid ambiguity which can lead to a loss of marks. It was also pleasing to see that only a very tiny minority did not follow the rubric and answered in English/Welsh in the section where responses in Spanish were needed.

At Higher tier, there were a considerable number of candidates who failed to score double digit marks, which raises the question whether these candidates had been entered for the incorrect tier.

Candidates should be reminded to always write clearly.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier

- Q.1** was an accessible start to the paper. It was set into the subtheme of *Current study* and covered the aspect of *School/college studies*. It involved multiple-choice questions and two verbal responses and was generally well attempted with only a minority failing to tick two correct boxes in (b). In (c) many candidates failed to recognise *informática* which was often translated as maths or technology.
- Q.2** was set into the subtheme of *Wider World* and covered the aspect of *Holidays and Tourism*. This question involved two verbal responses and three multiple choice questions. Again, many candidates scored very well on this question. The majority were able to answer all sections of the question correctly, but surprisingly a few candidates were unable to identify *actividades* in (a) and gave answers such as active.
- Q.3** was set into the subtheme of *Lifestyle* and covered the aspect of *Health and fitness*. It was set in Spanish and candidates were required to match names to pictures. Overall, a good performance, although a surprising number of candidates were unable to identify *piscina* or *paseo con el perro*.
- Q.4** was set into the subtheme of *Home and Locality* and covered the aspect of *Local areas of interest*. The question was set in Spanish, and candidates were required to tick the correct box and utterances were longer. Many candidates failed to recognise *llueve* in (c). It was pleasing to note that most candidates were able to answer successfully all questions in section 2, about leisure activities.

- Q.5** was set into the subtheme of *Enterprise, Employability and Future Plans* and covered the aspect of *Post-16 study*. Apart from Question 5 (a), which was very successful, section 2 proved to be challenging for most candidates. The majority managed to score one or two marks, by recognising cognates, *diferentes técnicas* and *editar fotos*. Those who attempted other options were unable to give creditworthy details, by writing just fashion or architecture. The most common error was in Q5 (c) where the candidates failed to recognise *cultivar tu estilo personal*, it is believed that many candidates heard the word *personal* and thought that the course would teach how to take personal photos. Very few candidates were able to recognise the word *paisaje*.
- Q.6** was set into the subtheme of *Global Sustainability* and covered the aspect of *Environment*. Question 6 proved to be quite challenging and showed candidates' lack of recognition of more familiar words. Many failed to understand that the text was about recycling plastic and the mentioning of containers in the text referred to plastic, rather than general waste. *Centro de reciclaje* was often misinterpreted as *central recycling* and many candidates failed to recognise the word *camión*. In section 2, *calor* often became colour/colourful. Very few candidates were able to understand the idea of having to have the air conditioning on and failed to recognise the word *tanta* which was required for the mark, rather than simply saying that Julia uses electricity. Teachers are advised to use the transcript of this task to show students how to process complete utterances, rather than rely on word-spotting for their answers. Good practice for candidates is to listen once and form a hypothesis about the answers, then listen to confirm or correct that hypothesis, only writing an answer after the second playing.

Foundation and higher tier questions

Q.1 (HT) and 7 (FT)

This question was set into the subtheme of *Custom and Traditions* and covered the aspect of *Festivals and celebrations*. This question involved verbal responses, with many foundation tier candidates failing to score a high mark mainly in (a), where the majority translated *ambiente* as environment and were unable to understand the verb *descubrir* thus limiting their answers to groups. Q7(b) was also problematic, with candidates giving answers about the quantity of singers/groups performing at the festival rather than the variety of them. In section 2, question 7(c) was often rendered as camping as candidates heard the word camping, while failing to understand *ducha, colas, precios*. In question 8(d) many candidates failed to recognise *coche* and translated it as *coach*. The answers proved a lack of theme-based vocabulary knowledge. Performance overall was better at Higher Tier with most candidates showing better understanding at sentence level, although at both tiers, *duerme en coche* and *colas* proved challenging. Teachers could revise vocabulary at start of lessons with a mind map activity, setting a time/score like a game.

Q.2 (HT) and 8 (FT)

This question was set into the subtheme of *Enterprise, Employability and Future Plans* and covered the aspect of *Employment*. This question involved verbal responses.

Performance overall was better at higher tier than at foundation level. At foundation tier, candidates failed to recognise the word *peluqueros* which was mainly translated as films; in 8(b) candidates struggled to understand *nuestra* which was rendered as *new*; the word *equipo* was mostly not recognised at foundation tier. In 8(c) very few candidates at both tiers managed to score the point. Section 2 was better understood at higher tier, while at foundation tier most candidates referred to holidays with special offers for children during school holidays. The answers suggested a lack of theme-based knowledge.

Teachers can practise inference skills with candidates, so that they are able to connect the clues they hear in the recording to the answers they need to arrive at. These can be developed, for example, using three-word-connection games. Tasks such as this can be helpful for widening and revising both productive and receptive vocabulary. Candidates can also produce them in pairs as puzzles and swap them over. They do not need to be confined to nouns.

For example:

Palabra 1	Palabra 2	Palabra 3	Pregunta	Contestación
<i>cama</i>	<i>sofá</i>	<i>mesa</i>	<i>¿dónde estoy?</i>	<i>en casa</i>
<i>libro</i>	<i>aula</i>	<i>alumno</i>	<i>¿en qué trabajo?</i>	<i>profesor/a</i>
<i>calles</i>	<i>coches</i>	<i>ruido</i>	<i>¿dónde vivo?</i>	<i>ciudad</i>

Q.3 (HT) and 9 (FT)

This question was set into the subtheme of *Enterprise, Employability and Future Plans* and covered the aspect of *Skills and personal qualities*. This question involved completing a table with verbal responses. Most candidates performed better in this question than in Question 8. The majority coped well in all sections, however in (a) many failed to recognise the passive form and instead of being respected by the teachers, very often the answer was to respect the teachers. In (b) some candidates lost marks either because they did not give enough information (one-word answer) or because they failed to refer to the comparison between school results and personal qualities.

Higher Tier questions only

Q.4 was set into the subtheme of *Global sustainability* and covered the aspect of *Environment*. For this question, candidates were required to complete a table in English. The majority coped well, but many failed to give accurate answers in (b), often rendered as 'in Spain', another example of a rather vague answer. In 4(c), most candidates scored only one mark and only very few of them fully understood the idea of educating people to take their rubbish home. Most answers fell short of the second part of the purpose of the scheme as candidates failed to link the two separate sentences. Students could practise by listening to longer texts/sentences and learning to draw conclusions based on what they have heard.

Q.5 was set into the subtheme of *Current studies* and covered the aspect of *School/college studies*. This was a non-verbal response type of question, and it was set in the target language. The most challenging part of Q5(c) where a minority of candidates failed to understand the word *comportamiento*.

- Q.6** was set into the subtheme of *The Wider world* and covered the aspect of *Holidays and tourism*. This was another assessed-language question and candidates were required to answer in Spanish. The most challenging question was 6(b) with the spelling of *relajarse* and *descansar*. 6(c) also proved a challenging one at time with the spelling of *costes*, often written as *costas*. Section 2 was generally successful, without major spelling issues of *fecha* or *actividades*, this one being the preferred option to *excursiones*, probably due to its more challenging spelling. Teachers could practise spelling of most demanding words in Spanish which will also enhance their candidates' writing skills.
- Q.7** was set into the subtheme of *Home and locality* and covered the aspect of *Local area of interest*. Overall candidates performed well on this question.
- (a) many translated *paz* as quiet, which was not acceptable. In section 2, the most challenging word was *lenta*, as only a minority translated as slow, whereas most candidates drew their answer from the words *conexión*, Internet and *problema*. The answer 'internet connection was a problem' was accepted as it encompasses the idea of a slow connection too.
 - (b) Another issue was the word *cantidades*, quite often translated as canteen, in answers such as: he ate at big canteens.
 - (c) The last question proved quite successful, with only a minority of candidates giving wrong answers such as: young people are expected to work, which was rejected.
- Q.8** was set into the subtheme of *current study* and covered the aspect of *School/college life*.
- (a) was not generally well answered, as most candidates failed to recognise *ahorrar*, *elegir (ropa) adecuada* and even *levantarse* was an issue often translated as *getting up*. Many candidates were also swayed by *the busco trabajo en las pizzerias* and *se pasa tiempo en casa* and their answers often included, buying clothes, working in a pizza restaurant and having to stay at home. Many others did not understand this section and gave answers such as: studying, going to work and washing their clothes.
 - (b) the main issue was the word *tarde* and candidates often answered that Alberto slept till the afternoon which was rejected. Teachers could use the transcript for a dictation task. The transcripts could be given to candidates with 10 short sections blanked out and they could be played the recording to fill them in. This would develop the skill of transcription that can be helpful in extracting meaning in listening comprehension.

Q.9 was set into the subtheme of *Lifestyle* and covered the aspect of *Entertainment and leisure*. Despite being the last question on the paper, it was encouraging to see many candidates accessing marks here. The most challenging questions were: 9(d) and 9(e).

- (d) candidates failed to recognise *precios* and *entradas* and gave guessed answers such as their earnings/their profit.
- (e) it was very surprising to see that the majority did not recognise *palomitas* or *refrescos* which was often translated as refreshments, or gave an educated guess, although wrong, by writing food and drinks, as these are commonly sold items in a cinema. Teachers could revise theme-based vocabulary with a mind map activity, paying particular attention to those words that are not very often used in conversation and can be easily forgotten.

Summary of key points

Teachers are advised to make use of the transcripts of the paper to help students develop their listening skills at sentence level rather than relying on word-spotting for their answers and/or jumping too easily to conclusions based on partial understanding.

This can lead to over-confidence and candidates finalise their answers after the first playing of the recording and then hardly listen the second time. Candidates still need to be reminded that answers are unlikely to be obvious and that they need to source the answers from the transcript to score points.

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UNIT 3 READING

Overview of the Unit

This unit requires learners to respond to a range of questions in English/Welsh and also in Spanish at higher tier.

At foundation tier, questions 1-4 required non-verbal responses; question 5 a mixture of non-verbal and verbal responses; questions 6-9 short verbal answers in English/Welsh and a short translation for question 10.

At higher tier, questions 1 and 2 were overlap questions with the foundation tier questions 8 & 9. Question 3 required non-verbal answers; question 4 required an answer in Spanish for (a); question 5 required answers in Spanish; questions 6-8 were to be answered in English and question 9 was a short translation.

It appears that candidates found this paper accessible and there was minimal evidence of candidates having been entered for the wrong tier.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier

- Q.1** The first question required non-verbal answers on a text about Holidays and Tourism falling under the Wider World sub theme. Candidates found this question accessible with all attempting it and a mean mark of 4.5.
- Q.2** This question again required non-verbal answers and treated the topic of Social Issues from the Global Sustainability sub theme. Candidates were given short statements to read and match them with pictures. The majority of candidates performed well on this question with another mean mark of 4.5.
- Q.3** This was a matching exercise. Candidates were required to read short statements about employment and match them up with written words pertaining to different careers. This came from the third broad sub theme of Enterprise, Employability and Future plans. This was a little more challenging and had a mean mark of 3.7.
- Q.4** This was a grammar gap-fill exercise on the topic of Technology and Social Media from the sub theme Youth Culture. Unfortunately, at this level, many candidates were unable to use knowledge of grammar rules to fill the correct boxes. It is unfortunate that with just a basic application of grammar, i.e. with the knowledge that feminine nouns end in 'a' or 'dad', or that masculine nouns follow 'este' or 'al', valuable extra marks could have been attained, and this can sometimes be the difference between two grades. This question was challenging with a mean mark of 1.6.

- Q.5** A longer text with two paragraphs requiring responses in English. The text referred to post -16 study.
- (b) social problems was also accepted
 - (c) here we had *trabajar en equipo* – *equipo* has been a constant in past reading papers. However not all candidates knew to answer with ‘work in a team’
- conocimiento de inglés* proved challenging. To gain the mark, candidates needed to answer with something like ‘knowledge of English’ or ‘able to speak English’. The word English alone was not awarded.
- Q.6** This was the first literary extract from the sub-theme of School/College Life. There were four short paragraphs and an example of direct speech. A good attempt was made on the questions.
- (e) the word *rio* was not known, and many candidates guessed at ‘went on an excursion to Rio’. Even though the first half was correct i.e. ‘go on an excursion’ the fact the second half of the answer was incorrect invalidated the mark. The mean mark for this question was 1.4 showing as one of the more challenging questions on the paper.
- Q.7** Here we had a blog about School/College subjects, specifically the importance of creative subjects.
- (a) The word subject was targeted
 - (b) ‘art’ and ‘sketch’ were accepted, but not ‘paint’
 - (c) the qualifiers ‘better’ and ‘less likely’ were targeted.
- The mean mark was 2.1.
- Q.8** This was the first overlap question with the Higher Tier, on the subject of Health and Fitness from the sub-theme Lifestyle.
- (a) posed few problems. ‘Watched videos/video clips’ were also awarded
 - (b) there were a few issues here: if mentioning the grandfather, candidate also had to reference the gym. Many candidates erroneously thought the grandfather owned the gym. ‘In secret’ was necessary for a mark to be awarded as a second option: she went to the gym in secret, but also ‘she practiced in secret’. She had been practicing Taekwondo since she was four – not for four years as many candidates thought.
 - (c) Well answered in general, with less candidates choosing the ‘skating’ option.
 - (d) Candidate needed to specify that it was when she did her first exam, not after.
 - (e) Well answered in general: candidate had to specify ‘school’ work.
- As would be expected, this was one of the more challenging questions for foundation tier candidates with a mean mark of 1.3.

Q.9 A longer literary text on the theme of Festivals and Celebrations from the sub-theme Customs and Traditions. It posed problems at both levels.

- (a) Well answered
- (b) Very few knew the word *miedo* for scared.
- (c) Most chose to answer 'eat sweets'. Caramels was not accepted. Very few answered with 'dress up' for *disfrazarse*.
- (d) Many were able to answer with 'listen to horror stories', but again this year, many candidates guessed the word 'history' and this invalidated any other correct response.
- (e) Was a challenge to even the higher candidates with many candidates having difficulties with *arruinadas por la lluvia y el viento*. Many guessed *roto* to be 'rotten'.
- (f) Very few correct answers although *interrumpir* could be considered a cognate: *no quiere interrumpir y no quiere que le descubran*.

The mean mark was 1.3 once again for this overlap question.

Q.10 This was the translation question from Spanish into English/Welsh on the topic of Travel and Transport.

- (i) A good attempt by most candidates
- (ii) *Afortunadamente* not known, and neither was *parada*.
- (iii) Well answered – the I think was targeted
- (iv) Tickets needed specifically – not prices.
- (v) No issues
- (vi) 'it made me late to class' was accepted as it was in the past tense and in the first person.

The mean mark was 1.7 out of 6.

Higher Tier

For Questions 1 & 2, see questions 8 & 9 from the foundation tier. As would be expected, these overlap questions had generally better responses at higher tier with mean marks of 3.3 and 3.0 respectively.

Q.3 This question required candidates to match statements about hotels to descriptive paragraphs. From the Holidays and Tourism sub-theme of the Wider World. This question required non-verbal responses with the rubric in Spanish.

The mean mark was 3.7.

- Q.4** From Career plans, this was another non-verbal response question. Rubric was in Spanish and as was noticed by some centres, the rubric mistakenly asked for *letra* when it should have said *número*. Examiners were advised to look out for this and fortunately no candidates were impacted by this rubric error. This question had the highest facility factor on the paper, 66.7, with a mean mark of 4.0 out of 6.
- Q.5** This was a gap-fill exercise on the topic of Food and Drink about vegetarian food for cats. Well answered in general with a 100% attempt rate and a mean mark of 3.8 out of 6.
- Q.6** A long text about the Princess Leonor attending a boarding school on the coast of Wales from School/College Life. This question was accessible to most students with many students making good attempts at these questions and scoring marks. This had a mean mark of 4.4 out of 8.
- Q.7** This was another 8-mark question: a literary text on the subject of caring for a pet unicorn. Despite the fact that some candidates refused to believe the text was about a pet unicorn, the text was accessible to most and candidates were able to score marks.
- (a) Not mascot; look after Otto was accepted i.e. no mention of pet or unicorn
 - (b) Candidates confused very for more.
 - (c) Many candidates thought it was 'what', not 'when' to feed him
 - (d) Not well answered
 - (e) Some good attempts despite it being found to be challenging.

A mean mark of 3.5 out of 8.

- Q.8** This was a longer text about school canteens and was accessible to most students.
- (c) examiners accepted 'wisely' or 'appropriately'
 - (d) examiners accepted also that the 'food was unhealthy'

This question was found to be accessible with a mean mark of 5.2 out of 8 and a facility factor of 64.9

- Q.9** The translation was on the subject of Local Areas of Interest. Candidates found some vocabulary challenging such as, *sin duda*, *vale la pena* and *tenemos suerte*. The mean mark was 2.0 out of 6.

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UNIT 4 WRITING

Overview of the Unit

The overall performance and accessibility of the Unit 4 papers was very pleasing this year, producing the data and outcomes in line with expectation. Candidates seemed generally well prepared for this unit overall, although there were still a minority of candidates this year at foundation tier level that did not attempt some parts of the assessment.

Most candidates were able to satisfy the word count at both foundation and higher level. The question titles allowed candidates scope to produce interesting and imaginative work, particularly at the higher level. On the whole, it was evident that candidates were prepared well for the format of this unit of the assessment.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier

Q.1 This question was set from the broad theme of 'Identity and Culture' and tested knowledge and understanding of the sub-sub theme of 'Food and drink'. Candidates appeared to be much better prepared for this question overall, with most producing a full sentence with a secure verb to gain 2 points. Very few self-penalised by writing too much. On this particular question, the following difficulties among a significant number of candidates were encountered:

- the incorrect conjugations of *comer* and *beber*, producing utterances such as '*mi como*' and '*mi bebo*' along with past tense responses
- writing '*español comida or comido*' was very common
- *agua* produced many different variations this year
- poor use of definite and indefinite articles
- for the section "where do you buy food?" it was common to see no verb at all and just a proper noun in there as a response.

Q.2 This question was set from the broad theme of 'Current and Future Study and Employment' and tested knowledge and understanding of the sub-sub theme of 'School and College Studies'. A relatively good response here in most cases with the majority of candidates attempting this response and reaching the required word count, covering all three bullet points. The main shortcomings among a few were as follows:

- The main issue was the mis-interpretation of the bullet point '*tu horario escolar*' with a significant number of candidates resorting to describing their school, not their school day or timetable
- a shortfall in words was quite common
- the time frame of '*este año*' posed a particular problem with lots of renditions in future and past tenses
- some candidates only answered one out of the three bullet points

Q.3 This question was set from the broad theme of 'Wales and the World – Areas of Interest' and tested knowledge and understanding of the sub-sub theme of 'Local areas of interest'. Overall, a very pleasing response to this question with most being able to satisfy the word count and covering the three compulsory bullet points. Candidates are much better prepared for this question now with many ticking to show coverage of the three compulsory bullet points. The big issue with this question was the failure to understand the word '*país*' which is in all three bullet point prompts. The following issues were common in this question:

- too much copying of sentence stems from the rubric with the guessing of the word '*país*'
- the use of the past tense was too challenging for a significant number of candidates
- many resorted to talking about holidays, thus misinterpreting the question
- lack of opinion in sentence starters and copying the rubric, especially with '*hiciste*'
- candidates just copying the words '*tu país*' without and adaptation to '*mi país*' or indeed any mention of a country at all
- '*un sitio*' also caused a problem with this being interpreted as a different country altogether

Q.4 This question was set from the broad theme of 'Current and Future Study and Employment' and tested knowledge and understanding of the sub-sub theme of 'Skills and personal qualities'. At foundation level, this question poses a particular problem when it comes to sustaining grammatical accuracy and conveying meaning. Most of the problems encountered this year were with verbs being in the correct form and the sheer lack of knowledge of basic topic-specific vocabulary. Please refer the common issues below:

Item 1: Many problems with word order and various spellings of '*interesante*'

Item 2: Not knowing the word for 'languages' posed a big problem

Item 3: The word '*equipo*' was poorly rendered and also the verb '*trabajo*'

Item 4: 'It's good to' was very poorly performed and many chose to ignore the word 'other'

Item 5: A very poor response here overall with poor recognition of the future tense, the verb to drive and the time frame 'next year'.

Higher Tier

Question 1 (overlap question)

As per my comments on the foundation tier, overall, candidates are being well prepared for this question. As to be expected, the responses to this question on the higher tier paper are of a better quality generally due to the ability of candidates entered for the higher paper.

It was clear that many candidates had learnt idiomatic language to include in their writing, this year again with some interesting expressions such as '*sin una sombra de duda*' and '*al fin y al cabo*' amongst many others, but it is worthy of note that it needs to suit the context of the question. Many candidates included the same idioms right across the two essay questions regardless of the context. The majority of candidates in the higher tier recognised and understood the requirement to be able to use the different time frames prescribed in the rubric.

Again, at higher tier, there was a big misconception of the word '*país*' with many choosing to write about the topic of holidays.

Q.2 This question was set from the broad theme of 'Identity and Culture' and tested knowledge and understanding of the sub-sub themes of 'Festivals and celebrations' and 'Health and Fitness'. There were some very inventive, original responses to this question and most candidates managed to satisfy the word count. More candidates opted for the question on health and fitness and generally rendered very good responses with lots of idiomatic use of language and a range of tenses. Candidates that chose to write about festivals and celebrations had good cultural knowledge of Spain and Spanish-speaking countries. The following shortcomings were evidenced:

- '*la semana pesada*' instead of '*la semana pasada*'
- inability to show competence in a variety of time frames
- too many basic errors impacting on communication
- straying from the question title eg by listing bands seen at a music festival
- it was not uncommon to see an infinitive used with no conjugations at all
- misuse or no use at all of the written accent on words, often leading to miscommunication of sentences.

Q.3 This question was set from the broad theme of 'Current and Future Study and Employment' and tested knowledge and understanding of the sub-sub theme of 'post 16 study'.

This question was a real discriminator on the higher paper with the main issue appearing to be that of poor vocabulary production. Very few candidates were able to translate the words 'government' and 'to pay' successfully (lots of *gastar* and *ganar* here), with the verb 'to cost' and the adjective 'expensive' also proving to be too difficult. 'living' was often mis-translated as '*viviendo*' with candidates failing to recognise the need for the infinitive after '*de*'. The modal verb '*debería*' also caused a significant number of problems along with 'today' with a lot of candidates using '*ahorra*'.

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