

# **Report on the Units**

---

**June 2009**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this Report.

© OCR 2009

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Annesley  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622  
Facsimile: 01223 552610  
E-mail: [publications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

## CONTENTS

### AS GCE/ADVANCED GCE SPANISH – H077

#### REPORT ON THE UNITS

<b>Unit/Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
F721: Speaking	1
F722: Listening, Reading and Writing 1	6
Grade Thresholds	10

# F721: Speaking

## General comments

This was the first examination for the new Specification and overall the transition from the outgoing Legacy Speaking test to this new version went smoothly. The majority of the tests (options 01 and 02) were conducted by teacher / examiners and all tests are now externally marked.

## Administration

There were some errors in administration and the following information is given to remind teachers of the requirements.

1. Care needs to be taken to make the correct entry:

- F721A 01 Externally Marked (CD/Tape - submitted by post)
- F721B 02 Externally Marked (OCR Repository - submitted via internet)
- F721C 03 Visiting Examiner (minimum 20 candidates)

2. Recordings of the tests must be accompanied by the attendance register, a completed working mark sheet and topic form for each candidate. If no candidate is present for the test it is still important to send the attendance register indicating that candidates are absent.

3. Recording quality is very important and although most candidates were clearly recorded there were a few instances where the recording level was very low, or where the position of the microphone favoured the teacher rather than the candidate.

4. It is important to adhere to the required timings. The role plays should last 5-6 minutes only, and the topic discussions up to a further 10 minutes.

5. The Speaking test now consists of two sections, equally weighted at 30 marks each. Section A is the role play and the stimulus materials should be given to candidates as determined by the Randomisation Sheet in the examiner's booklet. Section B is the topic discussion; it **must** relate directly to one of the topic areas for AS given in the Specification, and to the Hispanic context. There is no initial presentation for Section B.

## Section A: Role-play

It should be stressed this is a role play and not just a reading comprehension test or summary exercise. It requires candidate and teacher / examiner to engage in an exchange to explore and develop the *tarea* as outlined on the candidate's sheet, which involves the transmission of relevant information and an element of persuasion and reassurance. Both candidate – in the preparation time - and examiner need to have studied the *tarea* carefully to meet the assessment criteria.

Grid A "Use of stimulus" has a maximum of fifteen marks out of thirty. The candidate is required to convey relevant information from the material. Just allowing the candidate to attempt an uninterrupted pseudo-translation of the document (in order to cover the essential points) is not appropriate because ten marks are also available in Grid B "Response to Examiner". Here candidates can gain marks for showing initiative and imagination, for developing answers, and for leading the conversation, – in short, role play-ness. Important here also is how the candidate responds to the two, more open, questions arising from the context under discussion.

### **Grid A performance**

Many candidates could identify the essential points of the stimulus material – these are given in the bullet points on the candidate’s sheet and restated on the examiner’s sheet. Differentiation came with the clarity and depth of detail offered and the ability of the candidate in role as the provider of information to make the content relevant to the task and the particular requirements of the teacher / examiner in the client role. “Successfully conveys” is a key element in the assessment criteria. Better performing candidates had a clear idea of the scenario and were able to sift and categorise the information and present it in an organised and relevant way. Candidates who did not perform well tended to list a number of unconnected points, though teacher / examiners with a clear view of the task frequently intervened to request clarification of why such a detail might be important.

### **Grid B performance**

At the lower end, candidates depended heavily on the teacher / examiner to set the pace or maintain the momentum of the exchange. The role play was essentially a question-and-answer routine, with a wait for the next question and with little expansion or initiative from the candidate who at times gave incomplete or ambiguous answers. At the higher end, many candidates took the lead in the conversation and could embroider their answers with expressions such as “it’s important that...” or “in your case you could ...”, “I recommend ...”.

### **Grid C.1 performance**

Marks awarded covered the full range in Grid C1, though it must be said that very few candidates fell into the lowest category. Main weaknesses were gaps in basic grammar and an unwillingness to extend the linguistic range beyond that of GCSE. There is some apparent virtue in keeping structures simple because there is less room for error, possibly but to achieve the higher marks, candidates need to show a consistent level of accuracy in the use of complex AS structures. It is pleasing to report that examiners encountered several examples of candidates who were prepared to push the level, possibly taking some linguistic risk, but frequently showing confident use of a range of tenses, some subjunctives and generally appropriate vocabulary.

Lack of accuracy in more basic constructions was fairly common however, across the whole range. Errors in numbers, genders, agreements were common and the traditional Spanish hurdles of *ser / estar* and *gustar* maintained their customary challenge. The *gustar* construction had frequently mutated to a new verb “*tegustar*” as in “*mi padre tegusta ir*” or even “*nosotros no tegustamos el teatro*”; *vale la pena* became an adjective / adverb –“*creo que (estudiar) la historia es muy valelapena*”. There was confusion over the Spanish forms of “you” and the rare correct usage of the *usted* form where appropriate was appreciated. Candidates can use either the formal or informal forms but they must be consistent. Unfortunately, still far too many candidates think that variants on *vosotros* express formality.

Generally for Section A, teachers can remind candidates that key vocabulary is frequently cued within the wording outlining the *situación* and *tarea* on the candidate’s sheet. Additionally, if the candidate focuses on the task itself and paraphrases the nature of the information rather than translate the English wording, this is less likely to cause problems.

All the role plays start by inviting the candidate, after the examiner’s initial remarks, to ask two questions to obtain information that will be relevant to the role play and to set the context. These questions require a degree of linguistic manipulation and it was clear that many candidates found this challenging. As candidates perhaps more frequently use their Spanish to answer rather than ask questions, teachers may want to consider giving further time to revising the formulation of questions.

Teacher / examiners are reminded that they should offer all candidates the opportunity to use as wide a range of language as is possible or appropriate in the context of the role plays and to ask questions of differing types, factual, abstract, opinion, choices, etc.

### **Section B: Topic discussion**

The topics were normally well prepared and some candidates had clearly carried out considerable research. Although knowledge of the target-language country (AO4 of the former Specification) is no longer separately assessed, this new Specification requires candidates to relate sub-topics to aspects of the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of the Hispanic country or community. The topic for the discussion must be a sub-topic from the list of AS topics and candidates are required to explain facts and ideas as well as express relevant opinions and justify points of view. It must be stressed that candidates whose topics do not relate to the AS topic list will not be able to access the full range of marks for Grid 1D (Ideas, opinions and relevance).

It should be noted that although a number of teacher / examiners referred to “presentación”, there is in fact no initial presentation and the topic discussion is based on the points listed by the candidate on the topic form. It is permissible for the candidate to make a brief introductory statement to set a context, perhaps, but the key element is “discussion”.

There were very many examples of well-conducted tests. Many candidates had prepared their topic material well and could extend beyond description. There were many impressive examples of candidates who were able to see their topic within a wider context and who could present well-chosen relevant information to develop a range of ideas justifying points of view. They were in control of their information, and in the manner in which they discussed the points showed that they actually understood the topic they were dealing with.

In some cases where topics of a more general nature were offered (for example, la vida diaria, la salud, los jóvenes), references to the Hispanic context were sometimes very minimal, with just occasionally *en España* dropped in by way of justification. If comparisons are made between countries candidates should make quite clear which countries are being compared. Candidates did not achieve high marks if they presented topics that were anecdotal – food / drink treated as if for GCSE, for example – or were little more than a description of a holiday or a visit to a Spanish school. At AS level candidates need to go beyond description. If a literary text or a film is chosen candidates must show how it links to the relevant topic area, it is not sufficient just to relate the plot, for example.

A common error was for the discussion to become an invitation for the candidate to give a series of mini presentations, sometimes of unconnected aspects of a topic, with little intervention from the teacher / examiner to promote a discussion. Such performances do not achieve high marks on Grid E1 (Fluency, spontaneity, responsiveness) if fluency is confined to pre-learnt material. The points listed on the candidate’s topic form should serve as the framework for the discussion so that the candidate can respond readily and take the initiative, and show appropriate spontaneity. Unfortunately, there were some examples of good candidates being hampered by being insufficiently challenged by teacher / examiners and not having the opportunity to demonstrate an ability to discuss, justify or exemplify.

Pronunciation was generally good and encouragingly authentic but there were some cases of very anglicised pronunciation. Intonation was variable and it is this aspect which prevented some candidates achieving the higher marks on Grid G.

## Comment on individual questions

**Role play A** was a discussion of a visit to a Roman palace and the task was to explain the contents of the brochure and to convince (the examiner) of the value of visiting the site.

Most candidates dealt reasonably well with the type of place for the visit and candidates achieving higher marks mentioned the size and importance of the site, making reference to the floors and gardens, and links with the interests of one of the family.

Readily conveyed was the availability of gift shop, café, ice cream, etc. but sometimes overlooked was the provision of a picnic area and the type of photography permitted. Although most candidates referred to different types of tickets, better candidates offered suggestions on the more appropriate type for the family. Many candidates forgot about the dog, and this required some prompting from examiners.

Some linguistic challenges were “guide” (guided tours, guide dogs), *guido / guida* being quite common, “picnic”, “floor”, “objects”; distance from the station, and the months (January, December). The notion of the palace “as it was 2000 years ago” was frequently incorrect as *en el año dos mil*. Many hesitated over the dates.

The more open questions differentiated between candidates effectively. *Una excursión ideal para ti* prompted a range of suggestions, either hypothetical or more specifically linked to a visit to the palace (equally valid); answers to the second, *¿Vale la pena estudiar la historia?*, ranged from the simple *Sí / no, (no) es muy interesante* to more thoughtful, philosophical even, ideas.

**Role play B** was concerned with information about the Open University. In response to the initial questions, most candidates pointed out that you could study at home but better prepared candidates emphasised the specific nature of the work / study combination the University facilitated. Not all candidates understood the popularity of studying with employers who had paid for their staff to attend courses. Most candidates made some reference to the ability to meet tutors on study days but prompting was sometimes required for information about residential courses in the summer.

The passage contained a variety of statistics, numbers of courses and students, etc. and basic numbers were sometimes a challenge. Comparatively few candidates made reference to the 9-month courses. When asked about payment nearly all students managed some reference to the courses offering value for money and most conveyed the idea of paying by instalments, though some paraphrasing was needed. The question on how to obtain further information was generally well answered.

The more open question on studying in groups or alone was accessible to the majority of candidates and provided appropriate differentiation. There were some well thought out answers to the question on whether it is better to study or go out to work.

Although most of the language was reasonably straightforward, numbers such as 70 and 150 were sometimes incorrect. “5pm” was often *las cinco por la tarde*; “meet (your own tutor)” was usually *encontrar*, a few students offered *a plazos* for “instalments” but a suitable alternative was *cada mes*. “Advisers” was challenging but most got round this with *personas que te ayudan*. Surprisingly, very many candidates struggled with “degree”. Not all knew the Spanish for the letter W if giving the web site address.

**Role play C** took transport as its theme and required candidates to promote the use of the London Oyster Card. The candidate was told that the client (examiner) did not have a car so would need to use public transport and many candidates seized on this and made a good attempt to point out the card’s benefits.

*Report on the units taken in June 2009*

There were a few occasions where a teacher / examiner had perhaps not been listening to what the candidate had been saying. For example, after being told that you could use the card on various forms of transport s/he asked a question such as “Can I only use the card on (bus, tube, etc.)”.

Candidates communicated about buying and recharging the card but explaining how to use it was challenging and was a useful differentiator. Few problems were found with obtaining further information, but some candidates hesitated over expressing numbers.

The candidate’s sheet provided some key items, such as *tarjeta*, *económico*, *crédito*; some candidates struggled with “queuing”, “single fares” and, surprisingly, “yellow”.

The open questions on the merits or otherwise of public transport and on whether it is preferable to live in a large or small town or village offered plenty of opportunity to all candidates to offer some observations.



# **F722: Listening, Reading and Writing 1**

## **General Comments**

The first examination of this new specification discriminated well across the three skills and gave a pleasing reflection of how much progress had been made one year on from GCSE. Candidates achieving high marks showed equal proficiency at listening, reading and writing, others produced a more patchy performance.

On the listening tests the incline of difficulty produced a good range of marks. Reading comprehension skills were occasionally inconsistent on Tarea 5, generally good on Tarea 6, but Tarea 7(a) proved to be challenging.

Many candidates were able to communicate well in written Spanish and answers to Tarea 7(b) contained interesting ideas and opinions. On the downside, the decline in basic writing skills continues. Unclear handwriting and errors in spelling, punctuation and accents were not uncommon, indicating perhaps that candidates are more accustomed to writing electronically.

The examination made many demands on candidates and a few candidates who struggled to complete had been advised wisely to do the questions with most marks first, but sometimes they produced inconsistent answers for Tarea 6 or Tarea 5, because they seemed to have simply run out of steam.

One or two candidates failed to read the instructions and either answered Tarea 3 in Spanish or Tarea 6 in English. No marks were awarded in these cases.

## **Comments on individual questions**

### **TAREA 1**

The advertisement for alcohol-free beer provided an excellent, confidence-boosting opening test, which many candidates found well within their capabilities. The majority scored seven or more marks, indicating a competent standard of listening comprehension. Answer (b) was often incorrectly ticked.

### **TAREA 2**

This second listening test was also done well, although there was a wider degree of differentiation. Questions (b) and (d) were the most testing.

### **TAREA 3**

The varying levels of difficulty of this task meant that it differentiated well. Candidates should be advised that comprehension must be reinforced by precision in written English, if not there is a risk of losing marks. For example, the required answer to question (a) was 'summer camp', exactly as the recording had stated. Answers which said 'camp site' or 'holiday camp' were disregarded, along with those of the few candidates who decided this was a reading exercise and suggested 'Oxford beach'.

## *Report on the units taken in June 2009*

Apart from some inaccuracy in English, questions (a), (b) and (c) generally posed few problems. The first major stumbling block came with 'tiendas de campaña' in question (d), where every possible permutation of 'mounting the country shops' was suggested.

The best candidates scored maximum marks on question (e). Some of the vocabulary, and the requirement to spot a connection between short pieces of information and link them in the answer, proved to be challenging for many candidates. The word 'barro' was not widely known, leading to many different variations on 'working in a bar'.

Imprecise English, for example 'organise a game of sports', sometimes resulted in candidates not getting a mark for question (f). Most candidates got at least one mark for (g) ) and failure to recognise or mention 'edad' was the most common reason for missing the other mark. The three part question (h) was generally done well, but there was some confusion between 'role models' and 'table manners' caused by 'modales'.

### **TAREA 4**

Many candidates performed well on this question. A substantial number of candidates had sufficient command of written Spanish to enable them to communicate successfully the majority of the points.

It was pleasing to see some very good alternative ways of expressing the idea, rather than literal translation of the English. For example, the potential quicksand of 'how big are the groups that they have to supervise?' was neatly skirted by '¿cuántos alumnos/chicos hay en los grupos que tendremos que supervisar?' or '¿son grandes, los grupos que ....?' or '¿tenemos que supervisar a muchos chicos en los grupos?' This was exactly the kind of approach required for a transfer of meaning test.

Although the communication was of a more formal kind, candidates were not penalised for using an informal register - as long as they were consistent in such usage.

It was interesting to note how students have become so used to answering questions that they often do not know how to ask them. In some candidates' minds, 'how much?' = '¿cuánto cuesta', therefore '¿cuánto cuesta gana un monitor' = how much does a monitor earn? A similar favourite was '¿puedes dime?' = 'can you tell me?' This task type will frequently require questions to be written, and it was often apparent that some revision of the structures required would have been of value.

Minor, yet persistent, linguistic irritants included 'teléfono', 'prácticas' and 'la vieja de Inglaterra' ('travel from the UK'). There was a surprising amount of difficulty with expressing 'meals included'. 'I look forward to hearing from you' defeated a considerable number of candidates.

### **TAREA 5**

The conventional objective reading comprehension test discriminated well, although there were some signs that it may have been done a little hastily, (for example, confusion between 'sesenta' and 70). Questions (e) and (j) proved to be the most demanding.

## TAREA 6

This was a new type of test at AS level which rewarded both comprehension and quality of written communication. Most students connected (and frequently sympathised) with the central notion of allegations of pupil abuse against a teacher and the violent reaction from the father, but the spreading of the protest to staff in other schools and the demonstration at the Town Hall was misunderstood by some candidates.

The rubric for the task stated 'intenta utilizar tus propias palabras', and those who did so successfully were rewarded accordingly in their language mark. It was pleasing to see some very good rewording from better candidates on those questions which offered opportunities for this. Some candidates resorted to copying all or nearly all of a phrase from the text. Although this tactic often, but not always, picked up marks for comprehension, it did not allow candidates to gain marks for quality of language.

Question (a) offered candidates a confidence-boosting start, and was the only instance where phrases from the text were better than rewording.

Questions (b) and (c) were fairly easily identifiable in the text, yet offered some scope for rewording.

Several candidates treated (d) as an opinion question whereas the answers which were required were those in the text: either 'to inform the father' or 'because she had seen the incident'. Question (e) was an opinion question where candidates needed to show understanding of the text and suitable language to express their ideas. (The incident of the teacher leading a pupil by the arm was sometimes magnified out of all proportion into a crime against humanity) Questions (f) and (g) posed some problems with comprehension. For (f) an answer implying that the girl was still at the school was required. Answers to (g) were perhaps confused by the negative 'no volvió hasta el lunes'.

Questions (h) and (j) both required longer answers. Candidates who made no attempt at rewording and chose to blanket lift the relevant two lines from the text only scored one of the two comprehension marks available.

Questions (i), (k) and (l) proved to be fairly straightforward, although use of a past tense sometimes invalidated answers to (k).

## TAREA 7

Most, although not all, candidates appeared to have been made well aware that over one third of the marks available for this unit are to be found here. Therefore it was essential to invest an appropriate amount of time and effort in this task.

- 7(a) Only a limited number of candidates put in better than average performances in this section. Comprehension of the stimulus text appeared to challenge many candidates, and there were a few who mistakenly thought this was a forum for personal opinions. The dual meaning of 'cine' ('building' and the 'genre' or 'industry', as in English) was not clearly understood and answers suffered accordingly. Some candidates forgot that comprehension does include details rather than general summaries and as a result, failed to score when a vital phrase or word was missing from the answer. Lifting of five or more words from the text was taken into account when the overall quality of language mark was allocated, and also invalidated comprehension points if it was used systematically.

Points which proved difficult to communicate included:

- 'in the next few years there will be change' - candidates often thought it was the last few years;
- 'financial success is important' - not many candidates attempted to convey this idea and those that did were often unsuccessful;
- 'city centre cinemas have closed' - the city centre location (needed to make the contrast with the multiplexes in the suburbs) was often missing;
- the contrast between 'el cine de evasión' and 'el de reflexión' challenged many.

- 7(b) By contrast, this section of the task gave a positive performance. As required by the new specification, a far more open question was asked which, although related to the general theme of the text, needed no direct references to be made. This brought forth a very positive and often fulsome response from the vast majority of candidates who expressed a variety of opinions (clearly born from personal experience) on the attractions (or not) of going to the cinema and also explored the reasons behind their views. There was evidence of many candidates really seeking to develop arguments and opinions with insight and imagination. Twenty marks were available for the development of a range of ideas and opinions on this issue, and candidates of more modest linguistic ability were often able to achieve higher marks.

Arguments in favour of the cinema included: a social activity for family and friends; the big screen, sound system and special effects; a range of films to suit all tastes and ages; delicious food and drink; other activities available at the multiplexes; low prices; discussing the film with friends; good for a romantic liaison; see the latest films and top actors; the whole atmosphere generated by the dark and the audience.

Counter arguments were: noisy youngsters; people's heads in the way; people going to the loo; dirty seats; high prices and travel costs; can download free from internet; better to watch DVD at home because it's more comfortable, you can pause it, and watch it as many times as you like.

- 7QWC Twenty marks were also available for the quality of written communication in both 7(a) and 7(b) from Grids C.2 and F.2.

As was to be expected, the quality of the language used in 7(a), where candidates had to wrestle with the challenges of paraphrasing another person's viewpoints, tended to be slightly inferior to that used in 7(b). Nevertheless, there were many good turns of phrase to be admired, for example, 'el cine está en la flor de su vida en cuanto a la creatividad', or the seamless inclusion of more difficult constructions such as 'puede ser que no sea de buena calidad'.

The response section allowed candidates full control to use such language as they saw fit and many rose admirably to the challenge. There was a definite increase in confident, correct use of the subjunctive. Even learned phrases were used to good effect and in the right context. On the minus side we were treated to aberrations such as 'no podemos spender' or 'decir los sientos', and lots of phonetic spelling such as 'emberda' ('en verdad') from candidates of a bilingual background.

# Grade Thresholds

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Spanish (H077)  
June 2009 Examination Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F721	Raw	60	47	42	38	34	30	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0
F722	Raw	140	114	103	92	81	71	0
	UMS	140	112	98	84	70	56	0

## Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
<b>H077</b>	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
<b>H077</b>	22.5	44.6	66.1	79.7	89.6	100.0	931

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

[http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums\\_results.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
**1 Hills Road**  
**Cambridge**  
**CB1 2EU**

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

**14 – 19 Qualifications (General)**

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)**

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

**Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations**  
**is a Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Registered in England**  
**Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU**  
**Registered Company Number: 3484466**  
**OCR is an exempt Charity**



**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
**Head office**  
**Telephone: 01223 552552**  
**Facsimile: 01223 552553**