



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Spanish

46952

(Specification 4695)

Unit 2: Reading

Report on the Examination

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Foundation Tier

General Comments

Overall students found the Foundation examination slightly more accessible than last year. The majority of students are able to understand simple Spanish, especially in the shorter texts, and can match words and pictures correctly. On the whole nouns are known better than verbs and the parts of speech that are the least well known are adjectives. Students who do well on this paper can identify opinions and details. They follow the example, read the introductory rubric and can write coherent English with unambiguous spelling. Where they are having difficulties, they write intelligent guesses. Almost all of the Foundation students finish the paper. Despite *la vida sana* being a popular topic for the written and spoken controlled assessments, when these two words appeared individually as *vida* in Question 4 and *sana* in Question 8 many students did not recognise them.

Question 1

As usual Question 1 is designed to give all students a positive start to the examination and the majority of the student population got this first question right. Those that did not, failed to gain the mark because they thought that Otovalo was a person, not a place, even though this was explained in the introductory rubric.

Question 2

This tested places around the town as single items of vocabulary and they were well known.

Question 3

This question tested vocabulary from the same area of the specification and generally it was once again quite well known. Almost three quarters of the student population got all four marks.

Question 4

Question 4 went on to test vocabulary on the relationships and choices part of the lifestyle section of the specification. This question was more challenging in its demands. By following the example, students could see that a combination of a verb and a noun was required for the mark. Part (a) was very well done as it was based on a pair of cognates *respetar* and *opiniones*. Although many knew the cognate *controlar* in part (b) they did not know the word *vida* and therefore many made wild guesses as to what Pepe's mum wanted to control, such as the video control, the games and mobile phones. Part (c) was quite a challenge for many. The only word that was known was 'interests' and so many answers were made up around it and the Spanish word *mismos* was not well known at all.

Question 5

This tested the vocabulary in the lifestyle section of the specification which was well known. This vocabulary is generally well remembered by the majority of students.

Question 6

This was based on a longer text containing a variety of structures relating to past and present events based on the world of work. It differentiated well between those who could and could not pick out the main points and details.

Question 7

Question 7 is a familiar question style and students generally perform well on this type of question but this year they found it very challenging, especially in parts (b), (c) and (d). Students need to know the small but important words from the specification that can be key to understanding the opinions of the writers in this type of question.

For example in (b) the fact that Patricia has her own (*propio*) bedroom and does not have to (**No tengo que**) share her parents' bathroom is a positive outcome expressed in negative vocabulary. She goes on to say that no-one (*nadie*) bothers (*molesta*) her. Again a positive opinion expressed in negative vocabulary. Unfortunately some students still think that *nadie* is a girl's name. In (c) Marisol says that there is nothing (*nada*) good about her town and that she would like to see some interesting things for young people - not that she likes the interesting things. So here the students had to understand the difference between the present tense of the verb *gustar* and the conditional tense, but most only recognised the present tense. In (d) the expression *estar harto de* is not well known but is often used in these sorts of questions to express a negative opinion and is worth teaching and testing throughout the GCSE course to familiarise students with this useful piece of vocabulary.

Question 8

This text tested home and the environment vocabulary. The nouns were better known than the adjectives. Students do follow the example more these days and when they only know one of the two words tested they make up, in the main, sensible combinations. So while *ducha*, *cama* and *comida* were very well known, the adjectives *caliente*, *limpia* and surprisingly *sana* were less well known so many students failed to gain the mark because they only knew half of the correct answer.

Question 9

This is a question type that students are becoming more familiar with and depends on careful reading and re-reading to be able to eliminate two of the three answer options in all parts. Although about school, it asks students to consider four different aspects of school life. Part (a) was not very well done, perhaps because students understood the cognate *diferente* more than they understood *no es verdad*.

In part (b) students were on more familiar ground and this part was well done. In part (c) students had to focus their attention on wearing uniform in class, not in school in general, which perhaps made the difference between those who could and those who could not understand the detail in the two texts. Part (d) was particularly challenging. Most students thought that both Clara and Pedro loved the ski trip suggesting that the small but important word which makes all the difference – *aparte* - in Clara's text was not well known.

Question 10

This question was quite well done. Patricia was a common wrong choice. Perhaps students understood the first part of her statement – *quiero ir al festival de música* - but did not understand the final expression of regret that she would not be able to go (*¡Qué mala suerte!*). Víctor was another common incorrect answer despite the double 'no, no' in the text. Once again the word *poco* before *probable* makes all the difference between whether it is or is not likely that he will be attending. Perhaps some students misinterpreted *si* for *sí* as it was used twice in the text and they decided that Victor could attend the festival.

Question 11

This question tested the environment section of the specification. Over three quarters of the student population scored 4 marks on this question showing a very good understanding of this area of vocabulary.

Advice to students

- Read the introductory rubric and take note of it as it gives context to the question.
- Follow the example as closely as possible. Does the question ask for verb+noun or verb+noun+adjective or noun+adjective?
- Learn the small but important words and how they can make a difference, especially in understanding opinions. For example *nada, nadie, nunca, poco, un poco, (me gusta poco* and *me gusta un poco* express two very different opinions)
- Familiarise yourself with time phrases.
- Remember that *no* can in fact make a positive opinion. For example *no me molesta* – ‘it doesn’t bother me’ - is positive. Some positive looking words can make a negative opinion. For example *no es nada bueno* - ‘it’s not at all good’ - is a negative opinion.

Advice to teachers

- Do not neglect reading skills at the expense of the writing and speaking controlled assessments - they will help students with their controlled assessments.
- Teach and test vocabulary regularly.
- Teach the small but important words which help students identify opinions.

Higher Tier

General Comments

Overall students found this year’s examination at Higher a little more demanding than in 2011.

Students are presented with texts that have vocabulary from a variety of the specification’s sections in the same question and some find this more difficult than others who prefer to be tested on discrete areas of the specification. Some of the Higher students are very skilled at drawing conclusions and picking out details from redundant material. Some are very good at understanding familiar and, in some cases, unfamiliar vocabulary in unfamiliar contexts. They are also able to recognise attitudes and points of view, draw simple conclusions and write in clear coherent English with unambiguous spelling.

Question 1

Question 1 tested the vocabulary across the specification and some Higher students drew unanticipated but correct conclusions right from the start. *Hacer los deberes* was better known than *descansar*.

Question 2

In this question two details were required for one mark – a time phrase and an activity. The time phrases were well known. Students knew these very well indeed. However, it was disappointing that many students thought that *campo* was ‘camping’. A large number of students failed to gain the mark in part (a) for this reason. In part (b) only half of the student population knew *jugando a las cartas*. Many thought that Virginia used to go ‘karting’ with her brothers and sisters.

Question 3

Higher students performed much better on this question than their Foundation peers, yet part (d) continued to cause problems because of the small but important word *aparte*.

Question 4

This is a question type that Higher students are familiar with and they performed well in part (a) but less well in (b) and not very well at all in part (c). For each part of these questions there will usually be a couple of people to choose between. Two will mention for example the computers – in this case Sofía – directly using the word *ordenadores* - and Olga - less directly, using the word *pantalla*. The majority of students chose Sofía as the correct answer, because her reference to the world of computing was much more obvious than Olga’s. Only the most able of the Higher students can spot these subtle differences. Students need to look for the key idea in the question (eg ‘teach languages’ / ‘expensive university fees’) and look for the people who refer to them in the texts and then decide on the correct answer.

Question 5

Students at Higher performed much better on this question than their Foundation peers, showing that they had been entered for the correct tier by their teachers.

Question 6

This was a very demanding question in that each of the options A, B and C in each of the questions had a double summary. Students had to be very good at understanding the key concepts in each of the texts. None of the vocabulary for ‘punctuality/appearance/ICT’ skills will appear as an exact translation, so students have to draw conclusions and they did this well in parts (a) and (c) but less well in part (b). Perhaps they were distracted by ‘Internet’ because option B was a popular wrong answer.

Question 7

For part (a) it was frustrating to see that some students wasted a mark by answering with ‘shopping on line’ which was the activity given in the question. There were many guesses based on understanding *banco* without *acceder a mi cuenta del...* and guesses based on understanding *electrónico* without *correo*. Marking was generous so that two marks were awarded if students used the same verb for both activities (for example ‘opening his e-mails and his bank account’ got 2 marks). Overall, however, this question was not well done because students made poor guesses based on a part of the text that required an understanding of vocabulary listed for the Foundation tier.

Part (b) was well done. Students did understand that Tomás had put this list of passwords on the computer somewhere recorded or otherwise, but in part (c) only the most able students understood the whole final sentence and more importantly were able to articulate their answer. The majority thought that it was the passwords in the list that he could not remember instead

of the fact that it was a different password (the one to open the computer) that he had forgotten.

Question 8

Although this was a question style that students are very familiar with, it was more demanding than expected especially at Higher, suggesting that students had less practice on the Reading papers than in previous years perhaps, or that they are more complacent in their approach to this question style. Less than half of the student population got correct answers in all parts of the question, probably for the same reasons as the Foundation students – not understanding how the small words can indicate the opinions of their speakers. Students need to know the small but important words from the specification that can be key to understanding the opinions of the writers in this type of question. For example in (b) the fact that Patricia has her own (*propio*) bedroom and does not have to (**No tengo que**) share her parents' bathroom is a positive outcome expressed in negative vocabulary. She goes on to say that no-one (*nadie*) bothers (*molesta*) her. Again this is a positive opinion expressed in negative vocabulary. Unfortunately some students still think that *nadie* is a girl's name. In (c) Marisol says that there is nothing (*nada*) good about her town and that she would like to see some interesting things for young people - not that she likes the interesting things. So here the students had to understand the difference between the present tense of the verb *gustar* and the conditional tense, but most only recognised the present tense. In (d) the expression *estar harto de* is not well known but is often used in these sorts of questions to express a negative opinion.

Question 9

This is a question style that has been used on the Listening papers but this year appeared also on the Reading paper and students were well practised in its style and performed well. It is very pleasing to note that students can use their reading and listening skills across both examinations successfully.

Question 10

This was a question that required students to understand the language of a familiar topic, holidays, in what may have been for some an unfamiliar context – holidays of the future. They have to show that they can identify the main points from the redundant material and only the most skilful can do this. Many of the less able students referred to 'science fiction films' in part (a) showing that they were not able to transfer their vocabulary relating to leisure to the topic of holidays or they answered with 'science fiction mornings' and 'travelling to other planets'. By putting 'certain about' in the question this was supposed to direct the students to the part of the text where the answer lay, *estoy seguro de que*, but of course this only worked if students understood the Spanish and many did not.

In part (b) about half of the student population got this part correct although it was very clumsily expressed 'loss of gravity/no gravity/anti gravity'.

The rubric in part (c) asked for **full details** and not many were able to give enough detail for the mark here. Most were not able to deal with the language out of context. The prepositions *a fondo* and *debajo de* were the biggest obstacles to understanding.

Question 11

This question tests again the students' ability to give detailed answers from very short texts. Although part (a) was well done this year, parts (b) and (c) differentiated very well. Students need to use language from the **question** in Spanish **and in the answer** in the questionnaire to get a mark. For example in part (b) understanding the word *sí* is clearly insufficient for the

mark. Students had to understand *está orgulloso de ti* as well. This year, as in last year's examination, this question was very difficult for the majority of the Higher students. In (a) some students answered with 'clothes' as they were more familiar with the verb *llevar* connected with clothing than in the expression *llevarse bien/mal con alguien*. In (b) *orgulloso* was more frequently translated as 'organised' than 'proud' and some thought that Conchita was proud of her dad rather than her dad being proud of her. In part 9 (c) *a menudo* was not well known at all and many took it to be 'monthly'. With practice students should be able to perform better in the future on this question style and teachers would be advised to practise it in the classroom.

Question 12

Question 12 tests the students' ability to pick out the **most important** details from longer extended texts using complex language. So, when in (a) the question asks for the **new** advice on drinking water, students are required to discard the **old** advice. Frustratingly, many students wrote 'drink two litres of water a day'. The fact that the key question word is in bold in the question should alert students to the fact that there is going to be some old advice as well as some new advice and that they will have to be able to differentiate between the two. Understanding the word *ahora* was key to getting the answer right in part (a).

In part (b) the list of options was longer – was it the unpleasant boss, too much caffeine or the traffic jam that was causing **most** stress? *Aun peor* was the key to the correct answer here and although many did pin point the traffic as the main cause, only the most able knew it was the traffic 'jam' that was stressful not just 'traffic' on its own.

In part (c) many students understood *considerado malo para la salud* which is what many parents tell their children when they ask for ketchup with 'every' meal. What students failed to understand was the verb *ser* in the past tense which preceded the advice and was key to it being the wrong answer. Those who knew that it was **now** being linked to preventing some diseases missed out 'some' and failed to gain the mark because of lack of attention to detail.

Question 13

This question was appropriate for our current economic climate and also tested the leisure section of the specification. In part (a) the tiny word *mi* made all the difference because students thought that C was the correct answer because they had understood *casa* and ignored *mi*. Parts (b) and (c) were well done but part (d) was a little challenging for some. Perhaps they did not know *en lugar de*.

Question 14

Higher students finished the paper on a positive note after this question where the majority scored 3 marks, although Patricia continued to be a distraction for some, just as it had been on the Foundation paper.

Advice to students

- Read the introductory rubric and take note of it as it gives context to the question.
- Take note of any words in the question that are printed in bold as these direct you to find in the text the information required to answer the question. For example in Question 12 the emboldening of **latest** indicates that more than one piece of information is given about tomato ketchup, but that the correct answer is the most recent one.

- Follow the example as closely as possible. Does the question ask for verb+noun or verb+noun+adjective or noun+adjective?
- Learn the small but important words and how they can make a difference, especially in understanding attitudes and points of view.
- Remember that *no* can in fact make a positive opinion. For example *no me molesta* – ‘it doesn’t bother me’ - is positive. Some positive looking words can make a negative opinion. For example *no es nada bueno* - ‘it’s not at all good’ - is a negative opinion.
- Also practise looking for distracters – that is parts of the text that are there to make the real answer less obvious. This will help you in the questions that ask you to identify with the **most** important concept in the text. Knowledge of vocabulary such as *lo mejor, lo peor, más que nada, sobre todo, aún, todavía, no sólo... sino también, igual, lo mismo, mejor que* would be helpful for this type of question.
- When you are asked for **full** details, give as much information as possible. Very often this type of question requiring **full** details means that you need to give a longer answer, eg Question 10(c).
- Know your time phrases.
- Do not leave any questions unanswered – have a guess.
- Continue to follow the advice given in previous years of not giving a list of answers and expecting examiners to pick out the right one for you and continue to avoid using the oblique in your answers (eg money/sweets) as such answers do not score a mark.

Advice to teachers

- Do not neglect reading skills at the expense of the writing and speaking controlled assessments.
- Teach and test vocabulary regularly.
- Teach the small but important words and the vocabulary suggested above that will help students to pick out the most important concepts in the texts.
- Train students to follow the examples given and to spot verb+noun or verb+noun+adjective combinations.
- Train students to give full details to questions which require them to do so, eg question 10(c).

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