

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE  
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

**MAY/JUNE 2003**

**SPANISH**

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**CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION****MAY/JUNE 2003****GENERAL COMMENTS**

In Unit 1, ninety-three per cent of the candidates who wrote the examination achieved Grades I–V. This compares with 2002 when 86 per cent of candidates achieved Grades I–V. Candidates showed improved performances on all aspects of the examination.

In Unit 2, ninety-six per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–V. This is a decline from 2002 when there was a 100 per cent pass rate. This year, candidates did not perform as well on the Listening Comprehension aspect of the examination as last year’s candidates. While candidates need to improve in their oral skills, there is also need for them to pay attention overall to the areas of grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

**DETAILED COMMENTS****UNIT 1****PAPER 01 – Listening Comprehension**

This paper required candidates to respond to a series of questions based on five short passages and one extended interview. The questions were in English and candidates were required to respond in English. The performance of candidates in this paper was satisfactory. The topics chosen were in keeping with the experiences of the candidates. The following is a detailed description of candidates’ performance on the different sections.

**Section A – Short Selections**Selection 1

Performance in this selection was less than satisfactory with forty-eight per cent of the candidates scoring between 5 and 10 marks. Candidates had a fair idea of the subject matter and were able to give specific responses for 1(a). However, there were candidates who used the few clues that they heard to give answers based on their general knowledge, rather than on what the passage contained. Some candidates also had problems with words like “grasa” and “denunciar”.

Selection 2

This selection was well done. Seventy-four per cent of the candidates scored between 5 and 10 marks. One obvious problem was with the word “mendicidad” to which only a handful of candidates knew the answer. For part (c), many candidates used general knowledge which drew responses such as “teen pregnancy” and “street children”.

Selection 3

This selection was satisfactorily done by candidates. Most were able to get the location of the camp but few were able to precisely describe the tours and their duration. For part (c) (ii), few candidates were able to identify the two means of transport, most only getting “on foot”.

Selection 4

This selection was very well done with ninety-six per cent of candidates scoring between 4 and 6 marks. Many candidates scored the full six marks. Some candidates who were not sure of the answers ticked all the boxes instead of the three required. Candidates need to realize that in such a case they are penalized.

Selection 5

This selection dealing with electronic waste such as obsolete computers or televisions, was not well done. Thirty-one per cent of the candidates scored between 4 and 6 marks. The majority of candidates failed to give proper responses for parts (b) and (c). Part (b) required one reason for the example mentioned being considered “waste”, while part (c) asked why electronic waste was a source of concern.

**Section B - Extended interview**Selection 6

This selection required candidates to respond in English based on a continuous passage.

This selection proved to be problematic for many candidates. Only thirty-seven per cent of the candidates scored between 10 and 20 marks. Here, to compensate for their lack of understanding, candidates used their own general knowledge to answer the questions given. For example in question (a) regarding the definition of sleep, many candidates used their own general knowledge of sleep rather than what they heard. In parts (f)(i) and (ii) candidates confused the words “psychological” and “physiological”. Many did not seem to understand the meaning of the latter, thus giving responses for (f) (ii) as “sadness” and “loss of interest”.

Teachers should encourage candidates to try to get a global understanding of what they hear before attempting to respond. Also, they must use only what they hear in the passage on the subject matter. It is very clear that more intensive practice is needed in the area of listening.

**PAPER 02 – Reading and Writing****Section A – Reading Comprehension**Passage 1

This passage required candidates to respond in English, to questions in English, based on a Spanish passage. Performance on this question was very good with ninety per cent of the candidates obtaining at least 10 of the maximum 20 marks.

In part (a), the vast majority of candidates managed to answer this question (on the benefits of marriage) very well. Vocabulary was well within the candidates' range.

Part (b) of this question looked at marriage improving the emotional and economic quality of life for couples. The emotional aspect was well handled. The economic aspect was problematic in that many candidates did not attach much importance to the word "casi" and interpreted the answer to be that "two can live as cheaply or even cheaper than one".

Part (c) of this question was well done by most candidates. Some candidates interpreted "tienden" as "have to" or "forced to" and linked smoking and drinking to "risky activities". Also, the rapid discovery of symptoms of illness was interpreted as cure or non-occurrence of illness.

Part (d) seemed to be the most difficult question for candidates. It asked candidates to explain the specific reference made to cause and effect. Many misinterpreted the information given in the text. Very few candidates got the relationship between cause and effect.

Candidates performed very creditably on parts (e) to (i) of this question.

### Passage 2

This passage required candidates to give, in their own words, answers in Spanish to questions in Spanish. This question, though not as well handled by the candidates as the first passage, still saw 85 per cent gaining between 10 and 20 marks. Some of the vocabulary in the passage seemed to be a bit too challenging for some of the candidates. There were major problems with candidates lifting wholesale from the passage without making any attempt to paraphrase or put into their own words what they understood from what they read.

In part (a), there were some vocabulary problems here with "funcionarios" and "sindicatos" causing some misinterpretation of information.

In parts (b) to (e), there were instances of direct quotes. Candidates need to be constantly reminded that they are penalized for not using their own words to answer the questions. The most challenging question to express in their own words seemed to be question (c) since vocabulary in the scientific range was not quite evident. In part (e) (ii), where an opinion was asked, some candidates made no reference to the passage and talked about smoking in a more general sense.

Candidates are to be encouraged from very early to look for similar words/expressions/phrases/vocabulary in class to get accustomed to expressing themselves differently.

### **Section B - Essay**

This section required candidates to write an essay in Spanish of 250-300 words on one of five topics. This was fairly well done with most of the candidates obtaining at least half of the 20 marks possible. Candidates dealt reasonably well with content but lost marks for control of the language. Popular topics included 'La influencia de los programas de televisión...' and 'Los narcotraficantes deben recibir la pena de muerte'. The topics chosen seemed to be within the range of the candidates' knowledge, so that most were able to adequately discuss

the topic selected. However, some candidates dealt with their topic quite superficially, thus scoring very little for content.

There were many inaccuracies in grammar, especially in the area of tenses and agreements as well as anglicism, which showed a deficiency of vocabulary. Listed below are some of the grammar and vocabulary mistakes noted:

Lack of agreement with verb and subject, noun and adjective.

Plural noun , singular article, for example, 'La personas'

Omission of the personal 'a', for example, 'ayudar un individuo'

'poder' without the infinitive, for example, 'podemos mira'

incorrect use of the passive voice/use of 'estar' with the past participle

use of 'bien' for 'bueno'

'porque de' instead of 'a causa de'

'un otro'

use of 'lo' as a subject pronoun

'la gente' plus a plural verb, for example, 'La gente van'

improper use of 'gustar, for example, 'se gusta' for 'le gusta'

use of 'muy' for 'mucho'

position of object pronoun

'antes de' plus present participle

'ser' plus present participle

use of past participle for preterite, for example, 'La televisión desempenado'

omission and misuse of preposition, for example, 'tenemos a ir' instead of 'tenemos que ir'

### Vocabulary

'jugar' for 'desempenar'

'derecho' for 'correcto'

'morir' for 'matar'

'mostrar' for 'mirar'

'las piensas' for 'los pensamientos'

'tocar' for 'tomar'

'realizar' for 'darse cuenta'

### Common anglicisms

'en adición a'

en otras palabras

ha tomado lugar

a cada otro

en la otra mano

Candidates had many problems with spelling and the omission of, or misplaced, accents.

Candidates need to read and hear more Spanish. There is an obvious need for more attention to be paid to the areas of grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

## PAPER 03 – Literary Extracts and Themes

### Section A – Literary Extracts

This required candidates to read a literary extract and comment on character, plot, setting and simple literary techniques. This item was fairly well done with 57 per cent of the candidates obtaining at least half of the allocated marks. Most candidates chose to do the first extract, “La casa de los espíritus”. However, performance was generally better on the second extract, “Como agua para chocolate”.

#### Passage 1 – La casa de los espíritus

Of those who attempted this question 49 per cent scored between 0 and 10, and 51 per cent scored between 11 and 24. Some candidates on answering the questions quoted heavily from the extract instead of trying to express ideas in their own words. In some instances candidates gave little or no explanation or analysis.

In describing Clara’s character, part (a), most candidates said that she was “distruida y sencilla/simple”. Many misinterpreted the passage saying that she was “perezosa”, misinterpreting her role in the house and seeing her as unwilling to do household chores.

In part (b), many candidates lost marks for plot, not answering the question fully. The weaker candidates misinterpreted “trama” for “tema”. Perhaps because the plot involved psychological subterfuge and not much physical action, candidates experienced some level of difficulty.

Part (c) was badly done. Many candidates did not even attempt the question and those who did, just pulled chunks out of the extract without relating them to anything.

While some candidates understood part (d), too many seemed not to understand the term “punto de vista literario”. Most could not explain the effect that it had on the story.

#### Passage 2 – Como agua para chocolate

This was the slightly less popular question but with a marginally better performance. Sixty-four per cent of the candidates scored between 11 and 24 marks. There was some misinterpretation with regard to the relationship between the characters, perhaps because of the number of characters mentioned.

In part (a), in recounting the plot, some candidates confused Tita and Esperanza.

Part (b) was fairly well done, and in part (c), many candidates were able to describe Rosaura’s character.

In part (d), many candidates did not understand the importance of Tita in Esperanza’s life.

Once again there was the tendency to translate and regurgitate the text instead of trying to analyse. There were candidates who had nothing to offer in terms of responses to the questions, as if they were doing this kind of exercise for the first time. These questions do not demand any deep knowledge of literary analysis. Knowledge of what a plot is, how to do a

character sketch and how to identify narrative technique, are questions that keep recurring. Teachers are advised to use the specimen papers as a guide in the teaching of literary analysis. Also, candidates should be taught to use the marks allocated to each question as a guide as to the amount of information needed in the response.

### **Section B- Themes**

This section required candidates to explore one of the themes listed in the syllabus, making detailed reference to one literature text while providing support from other sources. Performance in this section was satisfactory with 50 per cent of the candidates scoring between 26 and 48 marks. Most candidates opted for the first two themes ‘La mujer en la sociedad’ and ‘El individuo al margen de la sociedad’. Very few candidates opted for ‘La juventud’. Many candidates performed creditably. They showed knowledge of the themes and related them to the prescribed texts. Many candidates, however, failed to answer the question directly. They regurgitated learned material and, at the beginning and end of the essay, they attempted to relate this material to the topic given. Questions 4, 6 and 7 were the best answered. Candidates were generally content with discussing only one text in detail, with only cursory reference to an additional text. Only a few candidates made any meaningful reference to more than one text. Some candidates quoted at length, sometimes without relating the quote to the point they were trying to make. Although candidates were allowed to bring a text into the examination room, they still misquoted, left out quotation marks, and misspelt words.

In question 4 the word “plenitud” was often misinterpreted. Many candidates interpreted it to be physical or sexual fulfillment and therefore only discussed love, passion and lust in this question.

Question 5 had a number of good responses with the use of “Pascual Duarte” and “El Túnel”. The better responses analysed in detail the mental Castel vs. the physical Pascual. However, there was very limited definition of “marginados”. In question 6, too many candidates argued only one side of the question saying that they are marginalized because of their own volition.

Not many references were made to balance the argument by including Pascual Duarte’s family background.

Word limit was often not respected. Candidates lost marks for writing a general essay with no reference to any text, and also for not supporting their arguments effectively with quotes from the text. Many who did refer to a text, lost marks for not including additional material. Teachers should ensure that all candidates are aware of the mark scheme for this question, highlighting the fact that they cannot go beyond a certain mark on the scheme if they do not refer to additional material. If candidates are aware of this and practice writing essays throughout the year, much better responses will be produced.

Candidates lost several marks for expression and vocabulary. The level of language was very often unsatisfactory, sometimes affecting comprehension. Grammatical errors identical to those highlighted on Paper 02 were also noted in this paper.

## **PAPER 04 – Internal Assessment**

### Oral Assessment

This paper required candidates to make an oral presentation on a topic of their choice, and engage in conversation with the examiner on this topic, as well as on abstract and/or current issues. Some recordings were of very poor quality, making moderation very difficult. There was a high level of background noise, for example vehicles passing, and children talking. Samples submitted for moderation need to be clear of background noise. Also, teachers need to label the cassettes properly and make sure that each candidate is identified properly on the tape. There were instances where the names on the mark sheet provided did not coincide with the names of the candidates on the tape. Teachers are to remember that no half marks are to be awarded to candidates but should be rounded off to the nearest whole number.

### Topic Presentation

These were generally well prepared by candidates and contained relevant facts. However, many candidates rushed through a presentation which they had learnt by rote. Some candidates did not seem to be in control of the material, as evidenced by their intonation when making the presentation. In many instances it appeared as though the candidate was actually reading his /her presentation. There were numerous errors in pronunciation and stress.

### Topic Conversation

This section was more challenging since many candidates, through lack of vocabulary and expression, were unable to respond properly or spontaneously to the examiner's questions on their topic. In a good interaction the examiner elicited good ideas and opinions from the candidate. There were instances where the examiner dominated the conversation. In instances where the candidate did not understand the question the examiner tended to repeat the question instead of trying to reword or paraphrase it.

### General Conversation

Generally, candidates felt more at ease and related better to topics which were part of their everyday experiences. Candidates had little problem responding to the general questions asked, but were hindered by lack of vocabulary and expression. There were numerous grammatical inaccuracies, more than in the written papers. Generally, the pronunciation of many of the candidates suggests that there needs to be more contact between the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking countries of this region. Candidates can only gain by being exposed to the target language as often as possible, whether it be directly through guest speakers, or through the use of videos and cassettes.

### Written Assignment

In their written assignment most candidates were able to cover the facts that were relevant to the topic. However, the following were missing in content – opinions, solutions to problems posed, and the recognition of different opinions by experts on the topic. Many candidates were unable to provide an adequate bibliography, and those who did, were not



knowledgeable as to how to write a proper one. Also, candidates did not seem to know how to format their project and lacked a proper introduction and conclusion.

### Content

Topics seemed to be generally well researched. However, there were candidates who made statements on their topic without explaining them.

### Language

Although there were some assignments that were excellent in terms of vocabulary and expression, most left much to be desired. Candidates were allowed to submit poorly translated documents from the Internet. In many instances corrections were not made by teachers and many mistakes were left unchecked. There were numerous inaccuracies in spelling and agreements. Anglicisms went uncorrected. In some samples there were marked inconsistencies in language, giving the impression that some of the work was copied straight from a magazine or other source. There was one assignment in which the candidate made reference to a photo which did not exist in his assignment.

Teachers need to monitor these assignments more closely. They need to get candidates to avoid submissions taken straight from the Internet without any personal input. Checks should be made periodically where ongoing work on the assignment can be seen. Deadlines can be given to submit stages of the assignment for example, topic, plan, or bibliography to be used. More attention should be paid to the quality of the language. If candidates are using scientific data they should be taught how to present it.

Finally, when they submit samples to be moderated teachers should ensure that forms submitted are filled out properly.

## UNIT 2

### **PAPER 01 – Listening Comprehension**

This paper required candidates to respond to a series of questions based on five short selections and one extended interview. The questions were in English and candidates were to respond in English. The candidates performed satisfactorily on this paper. The following is a breakdown of candidates' performance on each section.

#### **Section A – Short Selections**

This section was well done. However, some candidates made simple mistakes. Some of the reasons for poor performance by some of the candidates were misinterpretation, lack of vocabulary, and lack of global understanding of the selections.

#### Selection 1

Generally, this was one of the better selections for candidates. Seventy-two per cent of candidates scored between 5 and 10 marks.

Selection 2

This selection proved to be a bit more problematic for candidates. Thirty-eight per cent of candidates were able to give the numbers required in the answer - “14 volunteers, three months”. However, part (c) and part (e) did not yield many suitable responses. Candidates confused the word “physiological” with “psychological”.

Selection 3

This selection, dealing with Yahoo.com seeking new ways to finance its activity, was not well done. Many candidates totally misinterpreted the selection and did not seem to understand the meaning of “rentabilidad” and “archivos anexos”.

Selection 4

This selection was, in the main, poorly answered. Candidates used their general knowledge of cloning to respond to the questions as in the case of 4 (b) -the benefits of the “celulas madre”. They responded that the cells were used for in vitro fertilization for women who had problems conceiving.

Selection 5

This selection, on the discovery of atmosphere around a distant planet, was very well done. Seventy-six per cent of candidates scored the maximum 6 marks.

**Section B – Extended interview**Selection 6

This selection proved somewhat problematic for many candidates. Fifty-two per cent of the candidates scored between 10 and 20 marks. In part (c), many candidates did not know the meaning of the word “particular” and therefore could not provide the answer “private vehicle”. Part (d) proved to be especially problematic. Few candidates were able to identify the three steps involved in leasing a vehicle. Candidates need to be reminded to read the questions very carefully before attempting an answer. Again, more attention should be given to the practice of listening to the foreign language.

**PAPER 02 - Reading and Writing****Section A - Reading Comprehension**Passage 1

This passage required candidates to respond in English to questions in English based on the passage. Candidates performed very well on this question with eighty-eight per cent attaining between 10 and 20 marks. It was very clear that the majority of candidates understood the passage. In many instances almost full marks were scored on questions (a) – (e). It should be stressed to candidates that they carefully look at the mark weighting of each question before attempting an answer. The weighting generally gives a fair idea of how much information is

required. In terms of the specific vocabulary items for (f) – (j), candidates lost marks for not giving phrases that are similar in meaning. It should be noted that only the phrases which are similar are being looked at. In some instances candidates gave complete phrases/sentences. For example for “creciente” some candidates gave “un gran numero cada vez mayor” rather than “cada vez mayor”, and for “es necesario” candidates put “lo que mas hace falta es” rather than “hace falta”.

### Passage 2

This passage required candidates to answer in Spanish, in their own words, to questions in Spanish. This question was also well done with seventy-one per cent of the candidates scoring between 10 and 20 marks. It was clear that the majority of candidates understood the passage. Most of the candidates tried to put the answers in their own words and did this quite successfully. However, the weaker candidates were unable to do this effectively and thus lost marks for taking chunks from the passage. In many instances a great deal of irrelevant details were given especially for parts (c) and (d). Insufficient details were given for part (e). Although for this question many candidates were able to balance opinions with facts, many used general information, leaving out the information given in the passage. Again, candidates should be reminded to use the marks allocated to each question as a guide as to how much information is required. More emphasis should be placed on exercises involving paraphrasing and vocabulary acquisition.

### **Section B-Essay**

This paper required candidates to write an essay in Spanish of 250-300 words on one of five topics. Performance on this question was very good with sixty-nine per cent of the candidates scoring between 10 and 20 marks. Questions 4, 6 and 7 seemed to be the more popular choices. In terms of content, candidates’ responses were generally good. There were many instances of excellent essays, well-organized with facts, ideas and opinions. It was refreshing to note that many candidates used data from their own countries to back up their points. For example, for Question 6 on agriculture, many candidates used the example of the banana industry to show how the instability of the market affects the farmers, and hence the country’s economy.

Some essays which scored in the lower range were generally not relevant to the topic. For example, in question 4 candidates were found to be giving the advantages of tourism as “bringing in foreign exchange” and “employing many people” without actually linking their point to the topic. Generally, candidates who chose Question 7 “El terrorismo no tendrá impacto negativo en la industria de transporte aéreo”, had difficulty developing their ideas and relating relevant facts.

Although the language was of a higher standard than that of Unit I, there were still enough grammatical errors to conclude that the language of many candidates was not up to the standard expected at this level. For many candidates, inaccuracies in grammar were similar to those listed for Paper 02 of Unit I.

### PAPER 03 – Texts and Themes

This paper consisted of two sections.

#### Section A – Texts

This section required candidates to answer questions on one excerpt chosen from one of the prescribed texts. The questions were to be answered in Spanish. This section was poorly answered. Most candidates chose Question 1 on “El túnel” and Question 2 on “Crónica de una muerte anunciada”. Very few candidates answered questions on “La lluvia amarilla”.

For “El túnel”, many candidates gave very sketchy answers, showing that they could not relate the excerpt to the main theme of the novel. In part (a), many misunderstood the significance of the sea in the passage, very few getting the psychological significance.

In part (b), many candidates wrote that Maria’s confession proved that she was unfaithful to Castel and that she was a bad person.

In part (d), many candidates identified the theme of the passage but could not relate it adequately to the general theme of the novel.

The responses to Question 2 on “Crónica de una muerte anunciada” were slightly improved over those to the first question. However, parts (b) and (d) were more challenging. Many candidates said that Angela Vicario had many other options to save her honor and that of her family. The options offered by these candidates demonstrated their lack of understanding of the society and times in which Angela Vicario lived.

In part (d), candidates could not relate the passage to the rest of the novel since many of them could not give adequate examples of the novel being a “denuncia social”.

#### Section B – Themes

This section required candidates to explore one of the three themes listed in the syllabus, making detailed reference to one literature text while providing support from other sources. The more popular choices were “Conflicto y cambio en Hispanoamérica” and “La vida rural”. Texts used for these were “El coronel no tiene quien le escriba”, “Los de abajo”, “El llano en llamas” and “La lluvia amarilla”. Very few candidates attempted “Las relaciones interraciales”. This question was satisfactorily done with fifty-seven per cent of the candidates scoring at least half of the 48 marks. There were instances of some very excellent essays.

The essays on “Conflicto y cambio en Hispanoamérica” were generally superior to those on “La vida rural” because they addressed the issues and candidates seemed to be more at ease with this theme. While candidates were quite good at identifying the elements of conflict in Hispanic America, the question of analysis proved to be a problem for them. However, there was more discussion and a greater number of quotes, examples and references to additional material.

For the most part those candidates who chose to write on “La vida rural” were able to identify those elements in the chosen texts that spoke of the difficulty of life in the rural areas. Only

in exceptional cases, however, were there attempts to balance their perspective with a focus of the elements of difficulty in the urban setting.

In many cases, reference to additional material was often sparse or non-existent. Teachers need to emphasize that on the mark scheme candidates are penalized heavily for not referring to additional material. Those who chose to write on “Las relaciones interraciales” focused on poverty and inequality and social injustice in Hispanic America without relating those to race relations. Too much emphasis was placed on recounting the story of the novel and not enough attention was paid to analysis. There were many instances of grammatical mistakes very similar to those listed in Paper 02 of Unit I.

## **PAPER 04 - Internal Assessment**

### Oral Assessment

This paper required candidates to make an oral presentation on a topic of their choice and engage in conversation with the examiner on the topic, as well as on abstract and/or current issues. Candidates performed fairly well in this paper. Their presentations were of a higher standard than those of Unit I, and understandably so. Some candidates gave a very impressive performance both in their topic and general conversation. The level of language generally was appropriate to what one would expect of a candidate at this level.

Questions asked by the examiners were generally relevant and well chosen to bring out candidates’ level of understanding and social awareness. However, in some cases, the general questions failed to cover current issues. Some candidates were not given the option to express their opinions on social affairs.

Some of the tapes submitted were not well documented and in some instances, failure to identify the candidates on the tape made the moderation very difficult. Teachers also need to ensure that examinations are carried out in a secluded area away from any distraction.