



General Certificate of Education

Spanish 1696 *Specification*

SPAN1 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination *2009 examination - January series*

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General Comments

As expected, the first sitting of the new AS Spanish examination attracted a small number of entries, with fewer than 70 candidates entered for this Unit. Nonetheless, a wide range of marks emerged. The work of several candidates was outstanding, though there were examples of less able candidates who, it was felt by examiners, had been entered too early for this examination.

Given the small number of candidates entered for this examination, it cannot be considered to be a representative sample of students taking Spanish in Year 12 at schools and colleges across the country. Consequently, it would be unwise to make any forecast about this summer's grade boundaries based on this first entry. However, there are a number of general conclusions which can be drawn and which will help inform both candidates and teachers for future examinations.

Listening Section (Questions 1-4)

Question 1

The first question required a response in English and, happily, no candidate responded in Spanish. Many candidates scored well while others struggled. Answers of 'architecture', 'cars', 'atmosphere', 'beaches', 'bike' are too imprecise to gain the mark at AS level and candidates must provide sufficient detail. The mark scheme stipulates 'colonial architecture', 'cars from the 40's', 'relaxed atmosphere', 'white, sandy beaches', 'explore the island by bike'. The most poorly answered question was (c) where the majority of candidates did not get the correct answer, missing out the idea of the 'best hotels'. There was also confusion in (d) where many candidates did not get the idea of 'sharing' daily life with Cubans.

Question 2

This question on numbers was answered well by most candidates but there were also candidates who struggled greatly. The figures that caused most difficulty were '1.37', '200,000', and '480,000'.

Question 3

Here, many candidates did not perform well. Some chose to answer in their own way, but it is important to realise that in this type of question, there are no marks for grammar; all 10 marks are for content. It is sufficient, therefore, for candidates to find the correct answer from the text and then reproduce it without manipulating the Spanish. Some answers were very accessible: *pesaba mucho, era demasiado grande, misma marca, setenta y cinco minutos de batería, la cámara funciona mal*. Others were more challenging and frequently *llegaban* became *llevaban*, *mensajes* became *masajes*, *apagarse* became *a pagarse* and *cargalo* became *cagarlo*. Few candidates could spell *cámara*. This type of question differentiates well and candidates need to practise it on a regular basis.

Question 4

This question on Alejandro Sanz proved accessible for most candidates. The reading element of it was not too demanding with the most challenging vocabulary being *jubilada, acercarse, gira*.

Reading Section (Questions 5-9)

Question 5

This question on cinema titles was intended to be a confidence-boosting opener to the Reading section of the paper and proved to be fairly straightforward.

Question 6

This question on advertisements in *Páginas Amarillas* was basically a vocabulary test with some key words offered as clues to the category of advertisement. The less able candidates scored some marks, whilst the most able coped very well with linking *maleta* to *equipaje*, *camiones* to *vehículo*, *cásate* and *luna de miel* to *bodas*, *diagnosticar* to *servicios médicos*.

Question 7

Vocabulary is the key to all questions in the Reading section of the paper and although this question on smoking contained some greater depth of vocabulary and many imperatives, it caused few problems and scores were generally very good.

Question 8

This question about the dangers of water was not done very well. In this type of question where a written response is required, the answer, (as in Question 3), can be reproduced from the correct part of the text, without any manipulation of the Spanish. Many candidates scored poorly by adding or omitting too much or copying incorrectly, thus rendering the answer incorrect. Indiscriminately copying out large chunks of text will not gain the marks. Some questions elicited frequent incorrect responses such as (a) *el comienzo de las vacaciones*, (c) *caer de su kayak*, (d) *en la que ondeaba una bandera verde*, (e) *para intentar salvar a una joven*, (f) *atrapada entre rocas*, (g) *incapaz de nadar* and (h) where only one part of the body was offered.

Question 9

The verb and adjective test differentiated well and candidates unable to tackle this question with some confidence tended to produce very weak essays in Question 10. Question (a) elicited *cambio* from most candidates, which was the correct answer, but from (b) to (j) all sorts of variations were offered on every verb and adjective.

Writing Section (Question 10)

The most frequently attempted essay was 10(b) but all three titles were popular. Most candidates wrote well over the minimum limit of 200 words and only a few wrote just a few lines.

The mark scheme makes clear that the emphasis is on content and quality of language. It is important that candidates spend some time using the Essay Planning Sheet to brainstorm or mindmap the main thrust of the essay and then develop some kind of structure to help them stay on track. Many did this and scored full or almost full marks, putting forward sophisticated ideas allied to superb Spanish and impressive structure. However, some candidates rushed in, perhaps not really knowing where their essay was heading.

All three titles gave candidates the opportunity to structure the essay giving both sides of the argument if they so wished.

- 10(a) asked whether it is preferable to be part of a small or large family and this was done so that candidates immediately and recognised the opportunity to write about the advantages and disadvantages of small large families. The main ideas offered included the importance of sufficient love and attention, money, self-confidence, lifestyle opportunities, shared bedrooms, being spoilt, friendship for life, etc. A conclusion of some kind could then be drawn from the strength of the arguments or examples within those points.
- 10(b) asked whether television is a benefit or a disaster and, clearly, there were therefore two sides within the title for candidates to follow. One could be on the 'beneficial' programmes that amuse or educate or help us; examples offered were The Vicar of Dibley, the News and Eastenders (all totally valid as the specification welcomes evidence from any country). The second (addressing the "disaster" point) could look at, for example, excessively violent programmes, the 'couch potato' syndrome, lack of discussion among families, televisions in every room so that families split up, etc. Introductions often came from personal experience within a candidate's family and conclusions frequently mentioned the need to be more selective and to watch less.
- 10(c) asked if it is important or unimportant to follow fashion and, once again, a structure was there within the title for candidates. One side of the discussion could be how clothes, hair, appearance help us to project an image of ourselves and the other could look at how it is the inner person and not the exterior trappings that really count. It was interesting to read of how candidates obtain 'fashionable' clothes on EBay, in charity shops, in 'swap' shops; there was clearly some fast thinking going on in the examination room. Again, personal experience can be very helpful to develop a brief introduction and conclusion.

The grammatical accuracy and range of linguistic structures ranged from outstanding to poor. There was clear evidence of valuable topic-specific vocabulary from many candidates. Less able candidates tended to mention a large number of points which they then failed to develop; the marking criteria make it clear that content points must be 'well expressed and justified'. A small number of relevant points which are then expanded and illustrated are preferable to a list of brief bullet points. The suggested content points in the mark scheme are neither prescriptive nor definitive; any answer that fully meets the marking criteria will be highly rewarded.

The rubric at the start of the question emphasises the benefit of relevance, planning, examples and accuracy and teachers are asked to pass on this advice to their students.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Listening Section

For each question in the Listening section, both the duration of the heard material and the track numbers on the CD which correspond to that material will be printed in the Question and Answer booklet and on the transcript, eg

Length of passage: 55 seconds

Tracks: 10-18

Please draw this to the attention of all candidates.

Listening/Reading Sections

It should be pointed out that there is no longer a requirement for candidates to manipulate language in the Listening/Reading sections of this paper as the marks are awarded for comprehension only.

Writing Section

Annotation of Scripts from Summer 2009 onwards

The following conventions will be used by examiners on scripts when assessing Content.

✓	Point made
Irr	Irrelevant material
Rep	Repeated point
?	Lack of clarity

Additional Guidance for Responding to the Writing Section

Are candidates expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Candidates are not expected to include an introduction or conclusion, but it enhances the structure if there is a brief introduction and a concluding short paragraph, possibly including a personal response. One of the criteria is for a logical structure and this would enhance the overall structure of the essay.

Is a personal opinion valid as a point in the argument?

Yes, we gave ticks for personal opinions in the January session as we considered them valid as developments.

Should each point/opinion be backed up with an example?

Generally, yes. There must be plenty of justification of points/opinions in order to gain marks in the higher bands.

Are the examiners looking for a certain number of points/opinions plus examples, eg 3 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 3 against with evidence?

This would be sensible but we have no hard and fast rule on this since a limited number of points very well illustrated and developed would also be considered for the higher mark bands.

How does the marking scheme work in practice? Is there a list of relevant points, some of which the examiners are expecting to be included? If so, how many represents poor versus sufficient/very good?

There is a list of relevant points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and candidates will get credit for well-argued points not in the list. Examiners tick every relevant, clearly expressed point and give further ticks for development/examples/opinions etc. Thus a list of bullet point type arguments with no development cannot access the highest mark band. In order to access the highest mark band, candidates must also ensure that they meet all the other criteria, eg their ideas are clearly expressed, there is logical structure and they have answered fully the question set.

Is it just an instinctive overall rating of logical sequence and therefore individual points are not counted up?

There is no mathematical guide to Content marks - examiners have to make a decision based on the descriptors in the assessment criteria.

Are there any other questions which teachers should be asking to get a better understanding of how candidates are to be assessed in the essay question?

Yes, there are two sets of exemplar materials for the Writing section of Unit 1 as part of the Teacher Resource Bank. The Teacher Resource Bank materials are available on the AQA website.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.