



General Certificate of Education

Spanish 1696 *Specification*

SPAN1 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination *2009 examination - June series*

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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General Comments

This first summer sitting of SPAN1 discriminated well between the most able and least able candidates and also between those who rushed and those who devoted sufficient reading and preparation time to each question. The new examination is demanding in that it has an essay worth one third of the marks available and an enhanced grammar test. However, it was encouraging to see that full marks were achieved by some.

Listening Section (Questions 1-4)

Question 1

Pleasingly, in the question on models and anorexia, almost all candidates did offer their answers in English but a handful opted for Spanish or, more surprisingly, for a mixture of the two languages. This first question was intended to be a confidence-boosting exercise, and it was pleasing that the majority of candidates scored 5 marks or more. Those who did not were generally imprecise in their answers or simply did not know the necessary vocabulary. In (a) the word “very” or “too” was required to gain the mark. Mistakes over the height and weight of the models were frequent, “mustn’t be over 75 cm tall”, “must be over 175m tall”, “must weigh more than 156 kilos” etc. and the understanding of BMI/Body Mass Index Percentage was known by fewer candidates than expected. In (c) a wide range of adjectives was accepted for *estupendas*. “Criticise” and “jealous” caused spelling difficulties but the idea of girls wanting a body like a model’s was well understood. For (d) the adjectives *hermosas* and *elegantes* caused few problems but *alegres* created much uncertainty.

Question 2

The passage on graffiti in New York was to the liking of most candidates. There was some uncertainty over (a) to (c) but the final four questions were answered very well by candidates.

Question 3

The passage *Adela y Juan* was clearly the most challenging in the listening section and it received a mixed response. The answers, of course, are in the spoken passage and can be reproduced on the question/answer booklet without grammatical manipulation. The best answers are those that are brief; if there is only one dotted line given to the candidate for his/her response, there is no need to write three or four lines. It was pleasing to see how many candidates underlined the question word at the start of each question to help them answer logically; it does help to avoid incorrect answers such as “46” or “Chile” or *se casaron* to the question *¿Cuándo se celebró la boda de Adela y Juan?*

For many, it proved difficult to transcribe accurately and *han oído* frequently became *anoyido* and *de que había* became *que cabía*. *Con tristeza* often appeared in a conflated form of *contristeza* or *contristesas*. In (f) there were difficulties with the verb *unir* and *matrial* was a surprisingly frequent rendition of *material*. In (g), *mutual* was popular as was *bolar* rather than *volar* in (h). Students should be given every opportunity to develop their listening skills on a regular basis. It needs focused practice of different question types if students are to make the necessary progress.

Question 4

This ‘numbers’ question on drugs in Spain was one of the more accessible questions in the paper but it did cause difficulty for some. Both dots and commas were accepted in the percentage questions as it was clear that the Spanish style was not widely known; however, hyphens “2 – 6%” were not acceptable here as a completely different meaning is created. In (a), 13 *millones* found many offering 3 *millones*. Happily, in (b) most did understand that *primera* gave the figure “1”. It is worth reiterating the need to revisit this area on a regular basis in class time.

Reading Section (Questions 5-9)

Question 5

The obvious advice to offer in what appear to be simple, straightforward reading questions that test topic-specific vocabulary and comprehension is to take time over them. In the ‘Internet’ question, many candidates saw *cuentas bancarias* in (a) and *bancos* as the first of the ten options and went for it without any further reading. Likewise for (g), the words *vuelos*, *trenes* and the word *viaje* as option 4 made for a quick, easy, incorrect choice. Overall, (d) and (g) were the most problematic questions.

Question 6

In this ‘Ebay advertisements’ question, only (d) was found to be very straightforward; *pantalla* is well known from the Cinema sub-topic and televisions with *alta definición* are perhaps the norm in most homes. Otherwise, there was much uncertainty; in (a) due to *auto*, (e) due to *locomotora* and *tren* and (f) due, perhaps, to lack of the basic vocabulary *aparcamiento*.

Question 7

For this question on *La lengua de las mariposas* there is little to report as the question-style was understood and the exercise was completed rather easily by most candidates; scores of less than 6 were rare.

Question 8

This question on illegal adoption in Guatemala was done well overall, the most able candidates again judiciously employing underlining in the way described for question 3 - here to even better effect as it helped to keep answers concise. In this style of question a correct answer can, of course, be lifted from the text in every instance but carrying out that ‘lift’ proved to be difficult for some who failed to appreciate the need for concision and accuracy. Indiscriminately copying out large chunks of text will not gain the marks. The most difficult question to ‘lift’ was (b) but it could be answered even more easily by manipulating the material very simply and many chose to do it this way: *Antigua está al oeste de la capital* and *Antigua es una ciudad turística* were obvious correct options. Strangely, some thought that Antigua was a person. For (c), instead of the simple answer *los vecinos*, many decided to offer the second sentence of paragraph 2 in its entirety; such strategies are unlikely to work. In (d), failure to understand the question led to many candidates regurgitating the third sentence of paragraph 2 in full when two words, *tres meses*, is all that was sought. In (e), rather than limit themselves to the straightforward answer *papeles de adopción*, many gave most or the entire second sentence of paragraph 3. In (g), many failed to include *más de* before the figure “4.000”. It was clear to see which candidates had practised beforehand this type of exercise.

Question 9

The grammar question might appear easy enough given that phrases such as *el verano que viene* and *la semana pasada* offer clear guidance to the tense required. However, it proved to be very demanding for some whose knowledge of verbs is clearly very weak. Among the more noteworthy grammar points which emerged as difficult from the test, and which teachers might choose to revise with their students, are: formation and use of *gustar*, apocopation of adjectives, formation of irregular preterites, the present subjunctive, accentuation in verbs and adjectives.

Writing Section (Question 10)

Of the three choices, essays (a) and (b) were by far the most popular. Most candidates wrote well over the minimum limit of 200 words and, overall, the answers were at least comprehensible and often extremely fluently and accurately written. In order to guarantee that they produce a relevant and detailed answer, candidates should be encouraged to plan their essays, using the Essay Planning Sheet before tackling the essay question and of course candidates should be aware that examiners do not mark this; it is simply an aid. Although there is no notional upper word limit, essays which are over-long and rambling will by definition fail to be sufficiently focused. Teachers may find it helpful to pass on the following guidance to candidates.

Firstly, take time and care over the choice of question, ensuring that you have sufficient knowledge of the key vocabulary associated with the topic and a number of relevant points which you can make. You should avoid setting out your answer as a series of bullet points. Whenever you have made a point, you should try to develop and explain clearly what you mean, illustrating it with examples. You should also make sure that you answer the whole question. You should try to vary your language and avoid repetition and anglicisms, think about logical structure and appropriate linking phrases. A brief introduction and a conclusion will enhance your answer. Finally, you must avoid including irrelevant material which you may have used in previous practice pieces for your teacher. Everything you write should have some connection with the title of the question you have selected.

Question 10(a)

Candidates were asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of going to the cinema. The main ideas expressed in favour included the fact that cinema-going is a social occasion and that it gives you the chance to see the latest blockbusters in an atmospheric location where you get the chance to lose yourself, if only for a brief period of time. On the negative side, many candidates mentioned the sometimes excessive cost of cinema-going, the fact that sex and violence are often prevalent in contemporary cinema, and that people frequently make a noise and show little respect for those around them. Among the very best essays were those that addressed fewer broad issues but which discussed the merits of specific films that had been memorable for good or bad reasons; these ranged impressively widely from 'Lady and the Tramp' and 'Carry On Camping' through to 'Saving Private Ryan', 'Slumdog Millionaire', 'Volver', 'El orfanato' and 'El laberinto del fauno'. In general, this use of favourite films (bullet point 3 of the Cinema sub-topic) served very well as it gave concrete examples of the action, styles and themes that one can see on the screen and enabled candidates to limit their 'philosophising' about the impact of the cinema in society. Some chose to concentrate on film stars and this was another effective way of demonstrating the good and the bad that we are offered at the cinema. On the very positive side, many candidates' answers went well beyond the standard required at AS and provided detailed and eloquently expressed views on the influence that films had had on them personally.

Question 10(b)

Here, candidates were asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of going abroad on holiday. Again, the best essays frequently made reference to personal experiences of holidays abroad; just a few minutes' use of the Essay Planning Sheet can prove invaluable for jotting down the good and bad points of that recent holiday in Majorca or the school exchange with Madrid. Among the more commonly offered positive points were the opportunities it offered to escape from parents, to discover new places, to expand one's horizons, to practise a language that one is learning, to try local food and understand other cultures, to enjoy some sun and get a tan. On the negative side, the behaviour of some holidaymakers when abroad, noisy resorts, dirty hotel rooms, theft of money and property, loss of luggage in transit, security queues, endless flight delays, all made regular appearances as did the damage caused to the local and global environment. Some candidates chose to discuss holidays at home but the question clearly stated *en el extranjero* and, here again, the use of underlining could be used to good effect to clarify the question.

Question 10(c)

The short stimulus email from Luisa referring to disagreements between herself and her parents over the cost of a mobile phone, homework and lack of communication was meant to elicit responses to the question of the relationship between teenagers and their parents. A few opted to pursue just the 'technology' aspect of the question and this could be done successfully. Perhaps the best answers employed aspects of both Media and Family/Relationships. Thus, arguments employed were the time spent on and the cost of mobiles, the internet, television, sedentary lifestyle, obesity, not doing homework, poor career prospects, etc. allied to lack of communication between children and parents, freedom, friendships, rebellion, unhappiness and so on. The responses were generally thoughtful and often surprising, tending to be more favourable to the parents' point of view, the teenager in question being seen to be misguided in not appreciating her parents and making the most of her educational opportunities.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION**Listening Section**

From the January 2010 series onwards all centres will be supplied with two types of CD. One will be a single CD which will not be tracked and which will be suitable for downloading onto mp3 players, language laboratories etc. One CD of this type will be supplied per centre. The other CD will have individual tracks recorded so that candidates using individual CD players will be able to rewind and fast forward, using these tracks. Sufficient numbers of this CD will be supplied for all candidates entered at the centre. Centres can then choose which type of CD best meets their needs.

For each question in the Listening section, both the duration of the heard material and the track numbers from the tracked 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

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 are 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 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 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.