



General Certificate of Education

Spanish 1696
Specification

SPAN1 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

The paper served its purpose well, enabling the most able students to score very high marks and proving to be a harder test for those who were less strong linguistically. The mean mark for the paper was 72.3. In an examination that carries 110 marks, it was pleasing to see that many able linguists scored above 100. The most demanding questions, and therefore those that had the widest range of marks, were the essay and the grammar question (Question 9). Question 3 in the Listening Section and Question 7 in the Reading Section also differentiated well.

On-screen marking was used for this unit and candidates should be reminded that they must answer the questions in the spaces provided, as instructed on the front cover of the question paper. It is also very important that the instruction to candidates to write in black ink or ballpoint pen is adhered to, as answers written in blue ink or pen are very difficult to mark on screen. Unfortunately, a few candidates were careless in their writing and some of the letters they used in answering the comprehension questions were very hard to decipher.

Section A

Listening Section

Question 1 ¡Policías no muy rápidos!

The first question has to be answered in English. Candidates who answered in Spanish received no marks. Candidates had to be familiar with relatively straightforward topic subject matter and vocabulary. Parts (a) and (e) were accessible for almost all candidates. Part (b) caused difficulty for those who thought that *100 pesos* referred to weight rather than to Mexican currency. For those who did understand this, it was also essential to include **every kilo** in the answer. In (d), the same principle applied for the police needing to do 6 hours' exercise **per week** and eating 33% less **junk** food. Candidates also needed to give thought to providing the appropriate English words in the context of the question; in the demanding (c), *puertas estrechas* could not be credited if it was rendered as 'thin doors', nor could the word 'people' when the listening material clearly stated *delincuentes*. The idea of the police needing to defend **themselves** was also essential in this sub-section.

Question 2 Bodas caras en España

This question on numbers was answered well and caused few difficulties; some candidates did struggle with the correct number of zeros in the hundreds and thousands, but only (f) made the high overall success rate of the question drop in any significant way.

Question 3 Las vacaciones de las mujeres

This multiple-choice question required careful listening and reading skills and it differentiated well; (e) and (f) were the most accessible elements, (b) and (c) the most difficult.

Question 4 Los pantalones caídos

Although candidates do now realise that all the answers in this type of exercise are 'liftable' from the transcript, the responses revealed the weaknesses of some candidates. Basic words appeared too frequently as *sies, trenta, trente, trienta, quinientos, quinintos, classes, prission, prisson, suspencion, dolores* (for *dólares*), *enterior, cintrones, atakes, desquido, descuido, empresion*. The ability to transcribe correctly can only be developed through regular and consistent practice, and although most teachers undoubtedly provide their students with the opportunity to do this, it might be worthwhile investing even more time to enhance this valuable skill.

Reading Section

Question 5 Yahoo!

This opening question to the Reading Section of the paper was not too challenging and candidates scored well. There was some confusion among *Inmobiliaria*, *Ocio* and *Encuentros* but otherwise there were few problems.

Question 6 Siete deportes olímpicos

This question was straightforward for most candidates despite some less well known sports being among the possible choices. Parts (c), (f) and (g) were the most accessible and only (e) caused any real problem due to the vocabulary items *hielo* and *patinaje*.

Question 7 Una nueva campaña publicitaria

This question, based on the views of the singer Alaska, differentiated well. All the answers were 'liftable' but examiners saw too much imprecision. No marks are awarded if **too much** information is offered in the hope that a lot of writing will include the required answer and gain the mark. For example, in (a) *organizaciones contra la corrida* clearly does not answer the question asked, nor in (d), does *herida en la espalda*. Candidates who manipulate the text and use their own vocabulary to answer the question need to do so with care, to ensure that they do not do so incorrectly and, thereby, fail to gain the available marks.

Question 8 ¡Buen viaje!

This question on tourism around the world was straightforward. Only part (h) was answered poorly.

Question 9 Grammar

The grammar question with its seven verbs and three adjectives differentiated well. For part (c) around 75% of candidates correctly offered *peores* but in (b) only 20% knew the fifth person present tense of *preferir*. Otherwise, about half of the candidates answered the other eight questions correctly.

Section B

Writing Section

Large variations in word count were noted, with some candidates writing well in excess of the required minimum of 200 words but a few failing short of that target. A longer essay did not necessarily gain a higher mark; on the contrary the quality of some of the lengthier responses deteriorated towards the end. While essay plans are not marked and should not be sent off with the script, it was notable how those candidates who used the essay planning sheet tended to produce work which was more logically structured and easier for the reader to follow.

Many candidates wrote with commendable accuracy and fluency, demonstrating real mastery of the language; at the other extreme some depended far too heavily on a word-for-word translation style. As always the basic areas that demonstrated grammatical weaknesses were the understanding and the formation of verbs, accentuation, gender of nouns, adjectival agreement, *gustar*, prepositions plus infinitive, personal *a*, use of capital and small letters.

Question 10

This question on the age of mothers received a range of excellent and weak responses. It was answered very thoughtfully by many candidates, who responded to the stimulus material with a high degree of personal conviction about the ethics of being either a very young or a very old mother. The most frequent conclusion was that it is not the age of the mother that counts so much as the treatment and amount of love and attention the baby receives. The best answers were logically sequenced in that they addressed key ideas: lack of experience of life, lack of money, lack of education, skills and employment, parental help, stability, good income, good health, shared care by loving parents, lack of energy, generation gap, children caring for parents etc. As examples and justification are the key to maximising the Content mark, it is essential that candidates spend an appropriate amount of time on the planning of the essay.

Question 11

Once again, it must be reiterated that a few minutes thinking about **examples** would have benefitted many candidates. Too many essays philosophised about music without offering a single example of a singer or band. With a handful of examples it becomes so much easier to structure the essay and the 'favourites' from those who did do the invaluable preparatory thinking were Amy Winehouse and Pete Docherty as the 'bad cops' and Bono and Sting as the good ones. Other popular 'nominees', Madonna, Lady Gaga, Beyonce and Shakira received praise for being great singers and criticism for being too sexually provocative.

The points that were extrapolated from them were that a singer's lifestyle can influence young people into taking drugs or drinking too much, or conversely that it can inspire them to undertake good works that bring benefits to society as a whole. Clearly, musicians are seen to wield considerable influence over people's behaviour and life choices and various aspects of the topic were explored in depth by the most able candidates. Those who wrote the weakest answers tended to deliver a subjective, GCSE-type essay about the kind of music they liked and the colour of their ipod; they neglected to mention musicians at all. Attention to the wording of the question is essential, of course, and underlining the key words of the title would help many candidates to focus better on what is required in their response.

Question 12

This was the most popular question and many candidates seemed well prepared for it in general terms, but it did ask for examples and, with the exception of Cheryl Cole, hair extensions and the meerkats, few were given. The best essays, which were beautifully structured and written, emphasised information on prices and quality, government campaigns on drinking, driving, alcohol, smoking and sexual health, entertainment, humour, the economy of companies and of the nation, annoyance over the interruption of programmes, negative influences, body image, stereotypes etc.

The best advice for tackling the essay questions is summarised in the rubric. Candidates should plan the essay on the sheet provided, keeping the title in mind at all times to avoid repetition and irrelevance. Ideally, there should be a brief introduction and conclusion. The piece of writing itself should contain a number of valid points, illustrated and developed appropriately. Candidates should make sure they use topic-specific vocabulary which they have acquired when studying the topic and use longer sentences wherever possible.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Candidates must write using single line spacing when writing their answer for this section. Double line spacing (i.e. writing on alternate lines) must not be used. Those candidates who cannot complete their answer in the answer booklet must use additional answer sheets; they must not use the Essay Planning Sheet for this purpose as it is not sent for marking.

Essay Planning Sheet

The Essay Planning Sheet must be used for the plan only and will not be assessed. Essay Planning Sheets, together with any questions on inserts, must not be enclosed with the question paper and answer booklets when they are despatched for marking.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO THE WRITING QUESTION

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 give ticks for personal opinions as we consider 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 a logical structure to the essay 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.