



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Spanish

SPAN1

(Specification 2695)

Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The paper was accessible for the many able students who at AS have an excellent understanding of Spanish and the ability to write impressive essays. It was undoubtedly demanding for the less able students who need to improve their basic listening, reading and writing skills. The mean mark for the paper was 74.6.

On-screen marking was used for this unit and students 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 students 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 students were careless in their writing and some of the letters they used in answering the comprehension questions were hard to decipher.

Section A

Listening Section

Question 1 ¡Bebe con responsabilidad!

This question was tackled well with good marks being scored by many. A small number of students answered in Spanish despite the clarity of the rubric. Parts (a) and (b) were intentionally very accessible opening questions, but overly literal translation of the GCSE level phrase *el fin de semana* in (a) as ‘the end of the week’ was not accepted. The vocabulary of part (c) *menor tamaño, menos peso corporal y menos cantidad de agua en el cuerpo* proved more challenging and only a quarter of the students scored all three marks available. Suggestions that women have smaller hands (*tamaño*) and that women also have less water in the brain and indeed less brain did not gain the mark. Part (d) required noun and adjective to score the two marks available and students appreciated that at AS there is a need to give detail and the scores were accordingly high. Part (e) differentiated well; *despacio*, disappointingly, was not widely known and answers about spacing out your drinks were not accepted. Many students rendered *antes de* as ‘after’; care is needed at all times.

Question 2 Michael, ¿un buen padre?

The story about Michael Jackson differentiated well. In only three parts (a), (c) and (e) did over 80% of students find the correct response. The weakest element was (d) *mucha gente pensó que iba a lanzar al pequeño a la calle volvió con el bebé a su habitación* where students were much divided as to whether or not he did throw his son out of the window.

Question 3 ¡Ven a Tenerife!

The passage about fewer tourists visiting Tenerife was found to be very accessible; over 90% of students scored 4 of the 6 marks available.

Question 4 ¿Una nueva forma de celebrar el cumpleaños?

As always, this style of written comprehension question quickly highlighted those strong linguists who really understand what they are writing. Part (a) was a good example where the correct answer of infinitive + pronoun *anunciarlo/anunciarla en Facebook* is not difficult but it stands out against the frequent offering of *anunciala*. In part (b) the adjective *lujosa* was required as a qualifier for *mansión* and, as mentioned in Question 1 above, AS students generally are aware that they must offer the adjective in such circumstances to be sure of guaranteeing the mark. In (c) the reflexive pronoun was required. In (d) it is regrettable that so many students had difficulty with the spelling of *destrucción* and equally so in (e) with

Caribe where variations such as *carribbe*, *Caribbé* etc were quite frequently written. In (f) *disastre* was common. Students who struggled to cope with *quinientos* in (g) could have opted for the figure 500, as many did. Parts (h) and (i) were handled well but *bofetada* in (j) was understandably found to be more difficult.

Reading Section

Question 5 La televisión española y los niños

The opening question to the Reading section was, as usual, a gentle lead-in and students performed well. Parts (f) and (g) were the most accessible and (a) with its two synonymous phrases of *ir de paseo* and *sal a caminar* was the most difficult. Only just behind was (d) with its more advanced vocabulary of *desenchufar* and *apagar*.

Question 6 Los tatuajes

With only three answers to choose from each time, this question on tattoos was not especially demanding in (a), (b), (d) and (f) but only just over half of the students managed to find the correct answer to (c), (e) and (g). Students perhaps were too hastily attracted in (c) by the idea that women *atraen comentarios personales desagradables* rather than by spending a little more reading time on the second paragraph of the passage. In (e), many students were too hasty in selecting the words *serio* and *grave* as synonyms that they imagined had to be the correct answer whereas it was a distractor that needed to be avoided. In (g), the words *hombres*, *hombros* and *varones* caused problems. The best marks go, as always, to those with good knowledge of vocabulary and an ability not to jump to over-hasty conclusions.

Question 7 Slumdog Millionaire

The cloze exercise on the Oscar-winning film was handled well; indeed, over a third of students scored full marks and almost 90% scored 4 of the 7 marks available.

Question 8 Los tacones altos

Students are now well aware that the best way to answer this type of Reading comprehension is to lift the answer directly, concisely and with accurate spelling from the passage on the opposite page. Those who do not do so frequently write too much uncontrolled Spanish that, of course, can render their answer incorrect. It would seem to be a simple exercise but it is not always so and the question is designed not to be too easy. There are straightforward answers such as part (a) where the one word *ridículos* was all that was needed; in comparison, very few answered (f) correctly because it is not high heeled shoes that improve stomach muscles but the *uso continuado* of the same that does so. It is worth repeating that students who copy out long sections of the stimulus material are not rewarded with the mark.

Question 9 Verbs and adjectives

The test is a very useful guide to students and teachers about basic understanding of verb formation. Almost 80% of students were unable to form correctly the 6th person preterite of *detener* in (h). Parts (b), (f) and (i) were the three most accessible questions. There was evident discomfort with (a) where the adjective *obeso* should have been a guide to the need for the third person present tense of *ser* rather than the incorrect answers such as *son*, *sea*, *fue*, *sido*, *serían* etc. that were seen. Part (d) in which the feminine adjective was required with *hambre* did require some thought. The subjunctive *umente* in 9(j) was spotted by most but some offered the future tense given the context. Only consistent and targeted practice of this type of question can help to improve students' performance.

Section B

Writing Section

There was a very even spread in the choice of essay attempted; Question 12 just outnumbered Question 11, with Question 10 not far behind that.

In general, the essays were of a sensible length, some 2 to 3 sides. As always, some students offered quantity rather than quality but they were in the minority. For Content, most students tended to limit themselves to ideas given in the stimulus material but the more able students had their own thoughts which was welcomed. This specification is now three years old and students have been instructed well to read the question carefully and answer it with examples; the rubric states "Back up the points you make" and in general students are doing this. It would be good to see more specific, individual and credible examples rather than a series of standard opinions that come from text books, but this is a demanding test and the amount of time available for thinking and planning is certainly limited.

Many students write with commendable accuracy and fluency, demonstrating real mastery of the language and it is a pleasure to give full or nearly full marks on many occasions. At the other extreme, the less able students offer few or illogical ideas and depend far too heavily on a word-for-word translation style that quickly betrays their lack of knowledge of grammar.

As always, the areas that betrayed basic grammatical weaknesses were the understanding and the formation of verbs, accentuation, gender of nouns, adjectival agreement, *gustar*, prepositions plus infinitive, personal *a*, and use of capital and small letters.

Question 10 ¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre esta obsesión con la apariencia física hoy en día?

There was much criticism of the media with the well-rehearsed arguments about anorexic, bulimic and air-brushed models in newspapers, women's magazines and television advertisements. Good ideas were seen about the personal and career benefits of being or feeling attractive and of the difficulty in feeling confident and comfortable with one's appearance if it does not conform to the current fashions. Many wrote of their need to use make-up to boost self-confidence and to attract men. Those who tackled the idea of cosmetic surgery were almost universally damning of it saying that it is dangerous and that there are many deaths. It was disappointing to see few students offer a counter-balancing argument that even minor changes might change people's lives for the better by giving the self-confidence that was so prevalent among the concerns expressed. Much play was made of the need to follow a better diet and to do regular exercise to remedy physical problems.

Question 11 ¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo con esta opinión de Internet?

This title lent itself to students providing a balanced argument and it was pleasing to see that only very few failed to do so. Among the more commonly expressed points on the positive side were: communication with friends and family (email, Facebook and Skype), business use, shopping, seeking information, booking holidays. On the negative side we read of illegal downloads and piracy, cyber-bullying, identity theft, bank fraud, paedophiles and viruses. There was almost universal belief that the benefits of the Internet outweigh the disadvantages and that only the careless are at risk. There were many comments to the effect that *ya no podría vivir sin internet y mi móvil*.

Question 12 Para ti, ¿son mejores las vacaciones de sol y playa o unas vacaciones más útiles?

This essay was easy to structure and students welcomed the opportunity to write an 'advantages and disadvantages' essay. Understandably, very few students went beyond the four ideas given in the stimulus material for the question as this offered ample material for development. The content of the better essays was characterised by a more dispassionate and analytical approach, whereas less able students resorted to anecdotal reminiscences about their own holidays without really drawing out the benefits. Among the key points made were the fact that people need to relax and get a tan after working hard or studying all year or that traditional holidays are a good way of allowing family members to reconnect with each other. Perhaps surprisingly, there was no shortage of comment on how boring beach holidays can be. Others were honest about their selfish approach and spoke disparagingly about the discomforts of working in underdeveloped areas. The more socially-minded students spoke enthusiastically of doing development projects abroad to benefit others more needy than themselves and many spoke of work in Africa they had done or were going to do; regrettably, few gave convincing details and some more thought here would have been welcomed. Less altruistically, there was much talk of the benefits of doing such projects for one's CV and/or UCAS application form.

Guidance for Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Students 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. Only those students 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 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 students expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Students 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 suggested content points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and students 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, students 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.

Web Pages

Centres are reminded that a wealth of support documents can be found on our web pages (http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/spanish_materials.php?id=09&prev=09).

These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, Reports on the Examination and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For SPAN1 the TRB includes for the Writing Section additional specimen questions (to supplement past papers from previous series) and student exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing candidates for future examinations

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.