



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Spanish

SPA2T

(Specification 2695)

Unit 2: Speaking Test

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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General Comments

The administration of the tests was generally very good. Teachers are reminded that CDs and memory sticks should be clearly labelled and that individual sound files should be saved as .mp3 files and named as specified on page 8 of the *Instructions for the conduct of the examinations*. This booklet, available to download from www.aga.org.uk, is essential reading for those conducting the tests for the first time. Pages 11-13 **Format of the test** should be studied with care. Students may be deprived of high marks where all 4 topics are not covered appropriately or insufficient time is allowed for each topic.

The test itself should last a total of 15 minutes and examiners stop marking at the end of 15 minutes. Within this time the “very best practice” test will have kept to the following timings:

Part 1 Discussion of the Stimulus Card

5 minutes (approximate split 2½ for printed questions and 2½ minutes for discussion)

Part 2 Conversation

- Discussion of student’s nominated topic: 3 minutes 20 seconds
- Discussion of second topic: 3 minutes 20 seconds
- Discussion of third topic: 3 minutes 20 seconds.

Part 1: Discussion of the Stimulus Card

The overwhelming majority of teachers and students are familiar with the requirements of Part 1 and many scored full marks for both the printed questions and the more general discussion. Timing is an important factor in enabling students to access maximum marks. It is recommended therefore that they and their teachers practise the skill of answering the printed questions in approximately 2½ minutes, leaving roughly the same amount of time to develop the discussion further **within the same sub-topic**. They should also be encouraged to spend some of their 20 minutes’ preparation time anticipating possible avenues for developing the issues raised on the card.

Teachers are reminded that they should

- use all the stimulus cards where possible
- refrain from asking any supplementary questions between the printed ones
- ensure that the wider discussion remains within the sub-topic of the card
- discourage long pre-learnt speeches
- limit their use of “suggested” and rehearsed questions
- listen and respond to what the student says and so encourage spontaneity

Tarjeta A - Ofertas especiales

This was a popular card and many students gave interesting and detailed answers. However, in some cases the printed questions were answered too briefly so that development was limited to “a number of relevant points” or “some relevant points”. Answers to questions 4 and 5 were the least satisfactory in that they lacked examples or students relied on the same material to answer both. The descriptor “relevant” in the mark scheme refers to points relating to the individual question and not just the general topic area. The discussion part of this section generally focused on television adverts and students’ personal response to them, which products should not be advertised on television and whether it is preferable to pay a licence fee or endure irritating adverts. Some students were able to respond to question 2 using a subjunctive verb. *Atractar* was frequently used instead of *atraer*.

Tarjeta B - ¿Son aceptables estas conductas en una pareja?

Graphs on the stimulus card have been unpopular in the past, but this one proved to be an exception. The majority of students who chose the card gave mature, thoughtful answers. Question 3 elicited a range of responses, one student remarking that *insultar a la pareja* was a normal part of having a row. Not all students fully understood what is meant by *actitudes machistas*. Some thought they could be changed through education while others considered them normal and inevitable. Question 5 offered opportunities to describe a happy relationship but responses were often superficial and uninspiring. The best discussions were those that took up points raised by the graph such as *¿Qué otras conductas son inaceptables en tu opinión?* Some teachers began by asking the student if they would like to get married in the future, a question often deflected for quite sensible reasons. In a few cases, teachers failed to follow the guidelines which state that the discussion should remain within the sub-topic of the card and talked about other aspects of the Family. Teachers are reminded that a discussion that is pre-learnt will be awarded a maximum mark of 2/5 and it is therefore in the best interests of the student to make sure that they focus the discussion on issues raised by the stimulus material.

Tarjeta C - El autocine

The concept of a drive-in movie is clearly familiar to students and this card was a popular choice. Many said they would like to experience a drive-in movie perhaps once but that they would never be popular in the UK because of the poor weather and lack of space. One or two students talked about the importance of the car in American culture. Question 5 prompted many imaginative answers mentioning the latest technology and speculating on future developments. Examiners expressed their disappointment at the quality of the subsequent discussions which they described as GCSE-style or consisting of a list of set questions such as *¿Has visto una película española?* and *¿Cuáles son los elementos de una buena película?* Many students took the opportunity to complain about the cost of a visit to the cinema.

Tarjeta D - Cómo evitar las infecciones

This was the least popular card. It is surprising since it offered opportunities to recycle GCSE vocabulary, but many students struggled to remember words like *resfriado*, *gripe*, *servicios*, *sucio*, *tocar*, *jabón*, *antes de* and *después de*. Very few felt that more education about personal hygiene was needed or mentioned the increasing appearance of sanitising gels in schools, hospitals and public lavatories. Teachers were also reluctant to exploit these areas and tended to develop a discussion about diet, smoking, alcohol and drugs. Again, some went on to a different sub-topic and discussed Sport and exercise. *Prevenir* and *lavatorio* were commonly heard, and many did not notice that *manos* is feminine.

Tarjeta E - ¿Qué valores transmite la televisión a los niños?

Many students chose this card but not all exploited its possibilities to the full. Frequently students answered the first question by reading off the words on the card instead of summarising the main message which was that children tend to pick up negative attitudes from television. The most satisfactory answers to question 2 were those that gave examples of specific programmes and what messages these conveyed to children. Students who did so tended to mention *telenovelas* but surprisingly few talked about the many reality television programmes in which people exhibited many of these negative values. It was generally felt that parents should use filters to protect their children, limit the time they spend in front of the television or watch television with them. The prospect of a world without television was unthinkable because of the social, educational and recreational opportunities it provides. Discussions often centred on the student's own viewing habits and for this reason sometimes

failed to achieve the standard required at AS. It was disappointingly common to hear *las programas* and *documentarios*.

Tarjeta F - Las disputas entre amigas

Although very popular with girls, this card was also well done by some boys. It was generally accepted that girls fall out with each other more often than boys and over relatively trivial matters, but that disputes among boys were more likely to end in a physical fight. Responses to questions 4 and 5 varied in depth, with evidence of many students having thought seriously about these issues and others offering superficial ideas recommending *hablar* or *escuchar*. Again teachers tended to develop the discussion by asking about the student's own experiences which sometimes invited them to re-use GCSE level material. In a few cases, teachers developed the discussion on the sub-topic of Relationships within the family instead of Friendships. Common grammatical errors included *serioso*, *sensitivo* and *tan mucho*.

Part 2: Conversation

It was evident that January's entry included many year 13 students whose nominated topics were Cultural topics studied for A2, such as the films of Almodóvar, and these were well-informed and interesting. Levels of Fluency and Interaction were very high with almost all students scoring in the top two bands. There was a genuinely spontaneous feel to the majority of the tests although there were still cases of teachers who had prepared a series of questions and asked them without then listening to the student's response. Such practices deprive the student of opportunities to develop their answers spontaneously so that the likely mark for Interaction in these cases would not be above 6/10.

Pronunciation/Intonation

Examiners were impressed by the quality of pronunciation of many students, and it was unusual for a mark of less than 4/5 to be awarded. The usual problems were reported: the pronunciation of 'h', 'rr', 'j', 'ge', 'gi', 's', lack of precision in vowels sounds and incorrect placing of stress.

Knowledge of Grammar

Students this series demonstrated a more thorough knowledge of grammar than shown last summer. There was a good variety of linguistic structures used and many students showed that they could move between tenses with ease. The present subjunctive was used confidently and correctly after impersonal expressions of value judgements. Both the present and imperfect subjunctive were used successfully in 'si' clauses by a number of students. However many performances were marred by very basic errors in the conjugation of regular as well as irregular verbs. There was a very casual attitude to gender and agreement of adjectives, perhaps because of the awareness of the need to score marks for Fluency. A persistent problem was the placing of prepositions at the end of sentences e.g. *una persona que puedo hablar con*. Examiners also commented on the inability of many students to use *gustar* with any person except themselves, the omission of *que* to introduce relative clauses and the lack of the personal *a*. Happily fewer students in January exhibited the obsession with unnecessary fillers such as *si tuviera que expresar mi opinión...* or *ojalá pudiera concluir diciendo que...* that characterised some of last summer's tests. Examiners will be pleased to see this trend towards simpler, more correct Spanish continue in the future.

Annual Teacher Support Meetings

Schools and colleges are reminded that language-specific Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2012 covering both Unit 2 and Unit 4. These meetings will be full day meetings and free of charge. Further details can be obtained from the Events page of the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk) in due course.

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, Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For SPA2 the TRB includes advice to teachers conducting your own tests and the materials from the most recent set of Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests; this is an invaluable resource for preparing candidates for future examinations. The Secure Key Materials section of our website also includes helpful information; Examinations officers can give teachers access to this invaluable resource.

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.