



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

**Spanish**

**SPA4TV**

**(Specification 2695)**

**Unit 4: Speaking Test**

***Report on the Examination***

---

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**Copyright**

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).  
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

## General Comments

The majority of tests were well-conducted. A small number of recordings were not sufficiently audible because the microphone was too far away from the student or because there was too much background noise. Teachers are reminded to check the quality of the sound at the start of each session. Recordings should be labelled following the model provided on page 8 of the *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*. Occasionally CDs arrived damaged having been inadequately packaged.

Schools are reminded that 2013 will be the last year in which tests may be submitted on audio cassette.

## Part 1: Discussion of the Stimulus Card

The Notes for Examiners are now slightly more detailed than in previous series and this seems to have helped to clarify the issues to be debated. The notes were used effectively in most cases and there was also plenty of evidence of examiners bringing in their own ideas on the issues and, more importantly, developing the ideas expressed by the students. Marks awarded “in the face of challenges” depended on the willingness of examiners to explore and question students’ responses. The least successful performances were those in which the examiner paid insufficient attention to what the student was saying or whose challenges amounted to constant heckling.

Some performances were disappointing in that students preferred to rely on received opinions rather than forming their own views. When challenged, they were unable to develop answers further by perhaps illustrating their comments with observations of current events or personal experience. The fear of being politically incorrect led to some students expressing “safe” opinions about multiculturalism or poverty. They should be reassured that they are not marked on their views, only on their ability to express them.

Some students failed to score high marks because they did not focus on the specific issue on the card but made points relating to the general topic area. As with a written examination, the question must be carefully studied and, although in this case there is no correct answer, the specific question must be addressed.

## Response to the stimulus material (1 minute - 5 marks)

Timing in this section should be strictly observed. It is therefore essential that student, examiner and marker are clear about which card and which opinion the student has chosen before the timing of the one minute begins. The *Instructions for the conduct of the examinations* should be studied and applied. In some cases, students lost marks because teacher-examiners intervened too soon or allowed students to go on too long, sometimes for up to two minutes.

There were many well-prepared students who were able to make four or five points with some development in the form of exemplification or brief elaboration in their first minute. Some successful strategies were employed to structure their initial outline e.g. numbering their points or using certain words and phrases to separate out their points: *En primer lugar; también; además; es más; otra cosa es que; y encima...* While such techniques are useful, however, it is best to avoid lengthy and over-complex phrases that take up time and either add nothing to the substance or occasionally cloud the meaning. Points to note:

- students must choose **one** point of view to defend
- reading out the words in the bubble wastes 10-15 seconds and gains no marks
- there is no time for a general introduction to the topic

- simple, clear sentences are preferable to complex, over-elaborate language
- points should address the specific issue on the card, not the general topic area
- challenges to the points made should be anticipated and arguments prepared
- there are no marks for political correctness
- strong, well-expressed arguments will always gain marks, irrespective of the nature of the arguments.

### **Response to challenges by the examiner (4 minutes – 10 marks)**

Able students defended their points confidently and enthusiastically in the face of rigorous challenges by the examiner. Less able students tended to repeat points made in their initial outline with no real development or to rely on lengthy pre-learnt speeches that missed the point. Some students still think they must be conciliatory and start each response with *Sí, es verdad*, or *Entiendo tu punto de vista...* They should be aware that no specific marks are awarded for appreciating the other point of view.

Markers highlighted a number of teacher-examiner practices that disadvantaged the students:

- failing to listen and respond to specific points made by the student
- using set questions to elicit rehearsed answers
- departing from the issue presented on the card
- conducting a discussion of the wider topic area
- excessive “heckling”, preventing students from developing their ideas
- asking questions that were too lengthy, unclear and confusing.

### ***Tarjeta A - La energía nuclear, ¿es el futuro?***

There were some excellent debates on this card with some students showing a keen interest and expressing well-informed opinions. Often, students who chose to defend Opinión 2 had less to bring to the discussion once they had pointed out the dangers of nuclear power. Some largely ignored the title question and only spoke about alternative energies without really explaining why they thought they were a better option. Defenders of Opinión 1 tended to express more robust and detailed points in favour of nuclear energy which, they argued, was more efficient, cheaper, cleaner and nowadays safer than in the past.

### ***Tarjeta B - ¿Son buenos los matrimonios de raza mixta?***

This was the most popular card. Most students opted for Opinión 2, but both sides were well defended. Many students, themselves of mixed race, cited the advantages of being children of mixed parentage: they were better at languages, more tolerant and better-looking. Those who chose Opinión 1 referred to *la presión de la familia*, *los amigos* and *las costumbres* but seemed unaware of reports in the media of attacks on women who marry outside their community. Some relevant anecdotal evidence was given but students who based their opinion on a single example of a mixed marriage of their acquaintance merely repeated themselves. There was a good deal of “topic drift”: less able students tended to ignore the issue on the card and talk about the economic benefits or otherwise of immigration.

### **Tarjeta C - ¿Vale la pena donar dinero a las organizaciones caritativas?**

The majority of students who chose this card opted for Opinión 2 but often failed to demonstrate a real understanding of the issue. Their arguments were often based on the assumption that poverty was a problem in other countries and that developed countries had unlimited wealth to share. The issue of the effectiveness of donations to charity was not sufficiently explored. Fewer students chose to defend Opinión 1, but those who did offered more convincing arguments; for example, too much money is spent by charitable organisations on advertising, national governments are the ones responsible for the well-being of their people and handouts create dependency.

### **Tarjeta D - ¿Qué hacer con la basura?**

This card was the least popular and was sometimes poorly attempted because students (and some examiners) did not form a clear idea of the central issue which was whether or not the problem of waste is being tackled effectively. Opinión 1 represented the “alarmist” response to the issue and Opinión 2 expressed the belief that the problem is well under control. The evidence suggests that few students really grasped the meaning of *aprovecharlos* in Opinión 2 or failed to relate it to *los residuos* in the first sentence. Few students used the illustrations to give them ideas, although there were some references to the dangers posed to wildlife from landfill sites and one student said that we should see waste as a resource and not as a problem.

### **Tarjeta E - Las leyes anti-racistas: ¿la mejor forma de combatir el racismo?**

This was another popular choice and some good debates were heard from both points of view. The majority of students supported Opinión 1 but some struggled when asked to define what racism meant and the suggested *castigos* - prison sentences and heavy fines - were alarmingly harsh and unrealistic. Many students made good use of examples from the world of football. The least satisfactory performances were limited to a condemnation of racists with no reference to the *leyes* mentioned in the title and in both Opiniones. Convincing arguments were brought on the other side, citing democratic rights to free speech and pointing out that legislation can be counter-productive and may merely serve to harden attitudes.

### **Tarjeta F - ¿Se puede vivir sin Internet?**

This is a topic well-covered at AS and it offered the opportunity to use familiar vocabulary. Most candidates identified with Opinión 1 and could list several activities facilitated by the Internet. Not all candidates paid attention to the word *hogar* in both speech bubbles and made many references to the benefits provided by the Internet to industry and commerce which were not relevant to the question. Only a few students chose Opinión 2 and fewer considered the question from a perspective other than their own, such as that of people in full-time jobs who are now expected to be available out of hours or the elderly for whom information technology represents an alien culture.

## **Part 2: Conversation on Cultural Topics**

Tests in which less than 5 minutes was spent on each of the Cultural topics were rare. There were many excellent discussions with some very able students demonstrating a thorough knowledge of their topics and a linguistic competence that was impressive. However, some teacher-examiners are failing to test their students' ability to deal with unpredicted areas of questioning with sufficient rigour. Teachers are strongly advised not to begin this section of the test by saying “*Háblame de la obra...*”, and inviting students to deliver a pre-learnt monologue. To achieve a high mark for Interaction, students must be asked specific questions that invite views and opinions. Factual knowledge alone without a personal reaction or

analysis will not attract high marks. It is good practice to interrupt a student who appears to be operating in prepared speech mode so that s/he can show evidence of a spontaneous response. Teachers are advised to study the mark scheme carefully as well as the *Guidance Notes for teachers conducting their own tests* (page 10), accessible via the AQA website.

Where students lost marks for Interaction it was usually because they were only asked questions asking for factual information, or because their opinions were not challenged at some point by the examiner thus depriving them of the opportunity to “counter views”. This was especially so where the Cultural topic was a region or a period of history and this element of challenge tended to be neglected.

### **Cultural topics**

Very few schools studied two literary works, with very many opting for one literary text and a film. The most popular topics this year were:

#### **A target language-speaking region/community**

Cataluña, Andalucía, Galicia, Argentina, Cuba, Méjico.

Teachers who decide to study a region or community should give some thought as to how their students are to be challenged on the topic. The question of whether it is healthy for the economy of Andalucía to be so dependent on tourism; the likelihood of a region such as Cataluña gaining independence; whether the regional government of Castilla y León is doing enough to combat unemployment are the kind of issues that will produce the appropriate level of discussion rather than facts and figures about the geography and the climate.

#### **A period of 20<sup>th</sup> century history**

*La Guerra Civil, la Transición a la democracia.*

Again, the main area to be guarded against is that of being too factual at the expense of evaluation and personal reaction.

#### **An author**

Sender: *Réquiem por un campesino español*

Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

García Márquez: *Crónica de una muerte anunciada, El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

#### **A dramatist or poet**

Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba, Bodas de Sangre*

Ariel Dorfman: *La muerte y la doncella*

#### **A director, architect, musician, or painter**

Almodóvar: *Volver, Todo sobre mi madre, Hable con ella*

Guillermo del Toro: *El laberinto del fauno*

Amenábar: *Mar adentro*

José Luis Cuerda: *La lengua de las mariposas*

Gaudí, Dalí, Picasso

## **Knowledge of Grammar**

As in previous series, there was a wide variety in the grammatical competence of this year's students. Many showed an ability to form longer sentences using complex structures. Markers commented on a confident use of the present and imperfect subjunctive and in some cases the pluperfect subjunctive and conditional perfect. A good knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary was often apparent.

At the other extreme, frequent errors in basic structures and inadequate vocabulary were noted, even from students who in other respects scored reasonably well. The same grammatical mistakes referred to in the SPA2 report were again in evidence but at A2 these mistakes lower the grammar mark significantly more. These linguistic weaknesses were often highlighted when juxtaposed with pre-learnt chunks of highly sophisticated language that served to confuse rather than to enhance the conversation.

## **Teacher Support Meetings**

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](http://www.aqa.org.uk)) in due course.

Please note that this series of meetings will be the final opportunity to attend face to face training following Ofqual's decision to restrict face to face support for teachers. All materials used at the meetings in Autumn 2012 will be placed in the Teacher Resource Bank on AQA's website and will be available to download throughout the academic year.

## **Web Pages**

Schools 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](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). The TRB includes advice to teachers conducting your own tests and the materials from the Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students 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](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion).