

# A-level Spanish

Unit 2 Speaking  
Report on the Examination

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SPA2T/V  
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## Administration

Teachers and schools are to be congratulated on the administration of the Unit 2 tests. Visiting examiners received correctly filled in STMS forms and Cue cards from schools and were provided with satisfactory accommodation and support by MFL staff. Unfortunately the administration of teacher-conducted tests was less satisfactory and all the shortcomings outlined in last year's report were to be found this year. In brief:

- poor quality of recordings
- background noise
- wrongly labelled CDs and memory sticks
- packaging of tests

All the information needed for teachers conducting their own tests is to be found in the Instructions for the conduct of the Examinations pages 7-16. It is highly recommended that all teachers read this document very carefully prior to conducting their tests to ensure that students are given the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential.

## Part 1

The majority of students were well prepared for this part of the test and used their 20-minute preparation time to produce full and relevant answers. Some examiners noted that answers to the first question could be very brief indeed and consisted of nothing more than reading the text on the card. Students who attempted to give an outline of the issues raised by the card or who expressed a personal reaction frequently gained full marks for this section. On the other hand, many students spent well in excess of the 2½ minutes recommended for the five printed questions. Though they were awarded full marks for these questions, they left too little time for the more general discussion, denying themselves access to all of the remaining five marks.

It should be stressed that the more general discussion should follow on from the ideas raised by the printed questions. In the case of teacher-conducted tests, students failed to win marks because the discussion consisted of a series of pre-learnt answers on the subtopic area. For example, Card B, Health and well-being, dealt with a healthy diet but some teacher examiners failed to follow up the subject, reverting instead to unconnected discussions about smoking or drugs. Teacher examiners are also reminded that Part 1 relates to one specific subtopic, so that in the case of Card B, for example, they should avoid moving into the subtopic of Sport and exercise.

## Tarjeta A Los anuncios que nos informan

This card was very well done and one of the more popular choices of card. The majority of students were able to explain the difference between commercial advertising and public information adverts. Very able students could discuss the techniques used in these adverts, specifically the shock effect produced by some graphic pictures of traffic accidents or lung damage due to smoking. It was disappointing that, in the more general discussion, very many students talked only about commercial advertising, relying on familiar ideas rather than developing views and opinions. It would have been useful to consider whether allowing adverts for alcoholic drinks while campaigning for its responsible consumption gave out a somewhat mixed message.

## Tarjeta B La comida para llevar

This was a very popular card but its treatment was often superficial with both teacher examiners and students reproducing GCSE material, denouncing *comida basura* as being full of *grasa, sal y azúcar* while saying that it was delicious and could be eaten as part of a healthy diet but only in

moderation. Students were almost universally in favour of everyone being able to cook their own meals and promised to learn in preparation for university life. Many were unaware of the cost of basic ingredients in comparison with that of fast food and quite a few misunderstood the last question, thinking that it was asking if following a healthy diet was boring and not whether the subject itself bored them. Only a very small number focussed on the *para llevar* in the title, missing the opportunity to talk specifically about takeaway food eaten on the go rather than seated around a table. Although many students knew the Spanish for the items pictured on the card, there were some who used *la sana* instead of *la salud* and failed to distinguish between *una dieta sana* and *una vida sana*.

### **Tarjeta C ¿Cuáles son las razones de las disputas entre padres e adolescentes?**

This card was perhaps the most popular, dealing with issues close to students' hearts. They had plenty to say about parents' fears and ignorance of technology and some frank accounts of their relationships with their own parents. Most thought that parents should be able to understand their teenage children, having been that age once themselves, but that they were either too old, had forgotten or simply not adapted to modern life. Many stressed the importance of communication as the key to avoiding disputes saying it was necessary to *hablar*, although few said it was necessary to *escuchar*. There was often a lack of precision in the use of the words *niños*, *hijos* and *jóvenes* despite the card's focus on *adolescentes*.

### **Tarjeta D ¿Cómo prefieres escuchar música?**

This card was quite well done, eliciting some interesting answers. Most students expressed the opinion that they would not go to a classical music concert because classical music is boring or that Karaoke singers are usually drunk and can be fun to listen to unless they are your parents in which case it is very embarrassing. Opinions were divided on whether it is possible to study and listen to music at the same time. Many said that listening to instrumental (classical) music helped them to concentrate. There was little enthusiasm expressed for today's music, many preferring that of their parents' generation. Some common linguistic errors were *distractar*; *picturas*; *rudioso* and *jugar un instrumento*. The more general discussion often consisted of predictable questions about favourite types of music and artists, which did not develop the theme of ways of listening to music.

### **Tarjeta E ¿Es más fácil comprar online?**

Students who chose this card had clearly shopped online and were aware of the advantages and disadvantages, but not all had the appropriate vocabulary to describe them. In answer to the first question, some read out the captions under the pictures, preferring to omit the number 365. Many struggled to find ways of talking about trying on and sending back. The fourth question was sometimes misunderstood by students who confused *pagos* with *páginas*.

### **Tarjeta F Los elementos de una buena película**

This card was chosen less often, perhaps because many students offered Cinema as their Nominated topic. Some examiners heard interesting views and some commented that discussions were sometimes a bit predictable dealing with favourite films, favourite actors etc. Surprisingly, many students felt that actors deserved to be highly paid and praised some film stars who support charitable causes. Answers to question 5 were disappointing: some students took *el cine* to mean the cinema building and talked about ways of watching films in the future without visiting the cinema *en casa con un DVD, en el ordenador, en el móvil* and even *por holograma*. Pronunciation of *guión* and even *la banda sonora* proved difficult for some.

## Part 2

### Nominated topic

There were far fewer examples of Nominated topics treated as a presentation rather than a discussion. However, many students are anxious to give long, pre-learnt answers to familiar questions on their Nominated topic to both visiting and teacher examiners. Finding the balance between staying within the limits of the bullet points on the Cue card and encouraging spontaneity can be tricky. As a general rule, each question that targets a specific point should be followed up by a further question seeking exemplification, elaboration or justification. Although the student has chosen the topic and the area for discussion, examiners should always have in mind what the mark scheme requires for a mark in the top band for Interaction: **Responds well to regular opportunities to react spontaneously in developing ideas.**

### Timing

Most teacher examiners observed correct timings for their tests but it was not uncommon to hear the Nominated topic taking up to 5 minutes or more instead of 3½ minutes. If Part 1 and the Nominated topic are allowed to overrun, there is a risk that the final topic will be cut short, incurring a penalty of 2 marks. This is not avoidable by extending the test to 17 minutes or more because examiners are instructed to stop marking after 15 minutes (counting from the initial question *¿De qué trata esta tarjeta?*) It is a requirement of the test that 3 topics are covered in the 10 minutes of Part 2, with roughly equal time allocated to each. Examiners should also give a clear signal of a change of topic. Although some examiners contrive ingenious seamless links between topics, their skill does not favour the student who simply needs to know when one topic has been dealt with and the next is about to start.

### Interaction

Despite the advice given in last year's report to avoid relying on a set of questions that appear in several locations on the Internet, some teacher examiners are still basing most of their tests on these. Where this happens, the student's mark for Interaction is likely to be dramatically reduced. To achieve a high mark there should be evidence of genuine and meaningful interaction between examiner and student. It is disappointing to hear a student make an interesting point that could be developed only to be ignored by the examiner who does not pick up on this and simply moves on to the next question on the list.

On the other hand, there were many reports from examiners who enjoyed their interaction with students and were inspired and refreshed by the enthusiasm, humour and idealism of many of them. This was marred in some cases where students were anxious to demonstrate sophisticated sounding but redundant expressions that they mistakenly thought would improve their mark for Grammar. Again, despite earlier advice, this trend appears to be on the increase, with expressions such as:

- *es un hecho bien sabido que...*
- *si estuviera en mis manos...*
- *sin lugar a dudas...*
- *en lo que a mí me concierne...*
- *cualquier es capaz de ver que...*
- *no es de extrañar que...*
- *pongamos por caso...*

- *la verdad lisa y llana es...*
- *aunque quisiera pensar de otra manera...*
- *es de lamentar que...*

Occasionally a student's test contains so many of these expressions that it is not easy to pick out the meaningful elements of their conversation and the effect is artificial and confusing. Students are also advised to limit their use of *Desde mi punto de vista* and *¡Vaya pregunta!* and concentrate instead on expressing ideas and opinions in clear and simple language.

### **Pronunciation/Intonation**

Again, most students scored 4 or 5 for Pronunciation. Where marks were lost, it was for unclear or Anglicised vowel sounds: *gobierno*; *causar*; *dieta*. Students also need to pay attention the placing of stress on common words such as *fácil*; *difícil*; *móvil*; *Estados Unidos*; *comedia*.

### **Grammar**

There is no evidence to suggest that grammatical accuracy has improved this year. Some examiners noted a greater variety of vocabulary than in previous years e.g. *inocuo*; *marchoso*; *derroche*; *sobrado*; *perjudicial*. Some also commented favourably on a confident use of tenses and of the subjunctive. However, all the weaknesses listed in last year's report were mentioned again, such as the inability to use *gustar* correctly. However, it must be acknowledged that very many students and their teachers have worked hard to achieve a very good competence in spoken Spanish.

### **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 marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)