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## Examiners' Report January 2010

### GCE Spanish 6SP02/01

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## **GCE Spanish – Unit 1 Understanding and Written Response in Spanish General Comments**

Candidates are required to read and listen to authentic Spanish material and to retrieve and convey information given in the material by responding to a range of mainly Spanish questions. In the last question, they are required to write 200 – 220 words in Spanish (a letter, report or article) based on a short printed Spanish stimulus, involving the development of specific points from Spanish instructions.

This session's paper (only the second sitting of the new specification) proved accessible to a wide range of candidates. Whilst only the more able were successful in every question, there were opportunities for the less able to gain marks. There were very few unanswered questions and fewer marks lost for examination rubric offences (e.g. overlong essays) than in the past.

## Candidates' responses

### Text 1

This was a listening text about the production of ethanol from vegetable matter. Candidates had a choice of three endings from which to select to complete a sentence. Most candidates scored at least 2 out of four.

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Examiner Tip

All answers come in order through the text. If you have found the first and third answers, for example, the answer to the second question will be in the passage between them.

### Text 2

This was a radio interview about the study of mathematics. Candidates were required to find four correct statements from a choice of eight. This was generally completed well with most candidates scoring at least 2 out of 4 marks.

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Examiner Tip

Listening is a skill that can improve with practice. Teachers are advised to encourage candidates to find sites on the Internet where they can listen to authentic Spanish. Candidates should also be encouraged to watch films in Spanish. The more candidates practise their listening skills before the exam, the more comfortable and better they will perform in the exam.

### Text 3

In this listening passage, candidates were asked to find the 4 correct words (out of a possible 8) to complete a summary of a text about looking for work. Less able candidates managed to score 1 mark, but many candidates scored 3 or 4.



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Examiner Tip

In this question the choice of words can be narrowed down by looking at the grammar of the passage, e.g. (a) requires an adjective, so only 'temporal', 'permanente' or 'inglés' could fit here.

**Text 4**

This text is always an interview. Here there was an interview with a Spanish actress and singer. The answers have to be written in Spanish, but grammar and spelling mistakes are not penalised as long as the correct information can be understood. This year the majority of candidates could correctly identify the type of programme Blanca Romero stars in, to give them a mark for the first question.

The second question caused more problems as some candidates incorrectly identified in what ways the actress and her character are not alike, when they were asked to say how they are similar.

(b) ¿En qué se parece Blanca a su personaje Irene en la serie? (2)

~~Bastante organizada~~

Bastante organizada, complicada como todas las mujeres y brillantes.

'Bastante organizada' is not correct and although this candidate goes on to say that they share the characteristic of being 'complicada' and later 'brillante' (both of which are correct), 'brillante' cannot score a mark here as the candidate has already offered two answers, the first of which was wrong. This has been marked in accordance to the 'Order of elements' rule, which applies to Q4, 6, 7. In a two mark question, the examiner will always mark the first two answers offered and award marks for those, either both correct, one correct or none. Extra attempts cannot be credited with a mark, even if the given answer is correct.



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Examiner Tip

Teachers should discuss and explain the order of elements rule, and other marking guidance within the mark scheme to their candidates.. Candidates should always give the answers they are most sure about first, as examiners will only mark the first attempt of a 1 mark question and the first two attempts in a 2 mark question etc.


From the rest of this text, question (e) was the only one to cause much difficulty, as it required the candidates to infer an answer. Transcribing the words of the text will not do here; instead an answer indicating that she is not bothered by criticisms ('no le importan', 'no son importantes') is what is required.

### Text 5

This is the first of the reading questions, where candidates have to read and match a series of statements with four endangered species. This is the only reading question requiring a non-verbal response (just a cross in a box). On the whole it was answered well.

### Text 6

Here there are questions that must be answered in English. The passage talks about digital piracy. Questions 6(a) and (b) caused few problems, but many candidates were confused in (c). Measures being 'ausentes de la agenda política' was taken by some to mean that there are plans on the political agenda and 'tampoco' was often unknown. Poor English robbed some of a mark in (d), where 'temporal suspension' could not be given credit. 'La suspensión temporal del servicio' was also rendered by some as 'they have to do (national) service'. In 6(e) many candidates were unable to convey correctly that legal action has been taken against web sites for allowing illegal downloading. Simply 'downloading' could not gain a mark, as this can be done legally. Not many candidates recognised the meaning of 'normativa' and this gave rise to many varied answers about 'normal' music.



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Examiner Tip

Candidates should be encouraged to read Spanish texts of different lengths and from different sources: newspapers, websites, magazines, novels, non-fiction books and reports. As well as using the sample assessment materials and past papers teachers could try writing their own questions to go with the text.

## Text 7

This is the longest reading text and must be answered in Spanish. Again the quality of the writing is not considered as long as it does not interfere with understanding. The subject was the life of a deaf flamenco dancer. In contrast to previous series and in the spirit of assessing only reading skills, accurate lifts from the text were accepted. The copying of long parts of the text with the correct answer buried somewhere within, cannot be given credit.

Question 7(a) was answered correctly, in general, with a very minimal knowledge of mathematics being required to subtract 3 from 9. While answers of '3' and '9' were inevitable, it was more surprising to find '12' offered so many times. 7(b) caused difficulties for weaker candidates in their ability to communicate adequately how Mari and her family discovered her deafness. Examiners were sympathetic to lengthy and somewhat confused narratives about the trip to the market, as long as the basic message could still be retrieved.

(b) Cita **dos** ejemplos de cómo Mari Ángeles y su familia descubrieron que era sorda. (2)

mañana normal  
 Una ~~manana~~ <sup>mañana</sup> normal mientras, salió con su madre - de repente perdió todo el oído - ~~pero~~ <sup>pudo</sup> ver ~~los~~ <sup>los</sup> labios movimientos de labios pero no las palabras. Sus profesores eran harto de su desobediencia. Al final...  
 (c) ¿Qué problemas ha tenido a causa de su sordera? Da **tres** ejemplos. no podía oír nada. descubrieron que era sorda.

The long description of how Mari could see her mother's lips move but not hear the words is good for a mark. Although 'perdió el oído' is also correct, it conveys the same information (i.e. how Mari discovered her deafness). The second point can only be awarded for information about how her family found out. In this example, the teachers have discovered her disobedience, but, crucially, not rung her parents.

In 7(c), there are three problems to find. Most candidates managed to identify a 'crisis de autoestima', although some lost the mark by saying that overcoming it was the problem, when in fact having it or having to overcome it was the problem, 'tuvo que afrontar temores' gained a mark for many, but the concept of being unable to lip read the maths teacher as she taught with her back to the class was sometimes poorly conveyed. Many more candidates thought she had to leave the school for hearing children, when the problem was that she had to study in a school for hearing children.

7(d) Weaker candidates found it difficult to sort out the relevant information in this question. Learning to lip read was easier to find than concentrating on the movements of others or learning the rhythm.

In 7(e), some candidates did not recognise the expression '¿a qué se dedica?' and often answered by saying she sings in sign language. Although most managed to grasp the idea of 10 minutes of applause as proof of her success, some mentioned the fact that she (or the audience) cried.

The best candidates revealed themselves in this question by their ability to express complex ideas clearly. Less able candidates still picked up marks by being able to show that they had read and understood, even if they were less precise in expressing themselves.

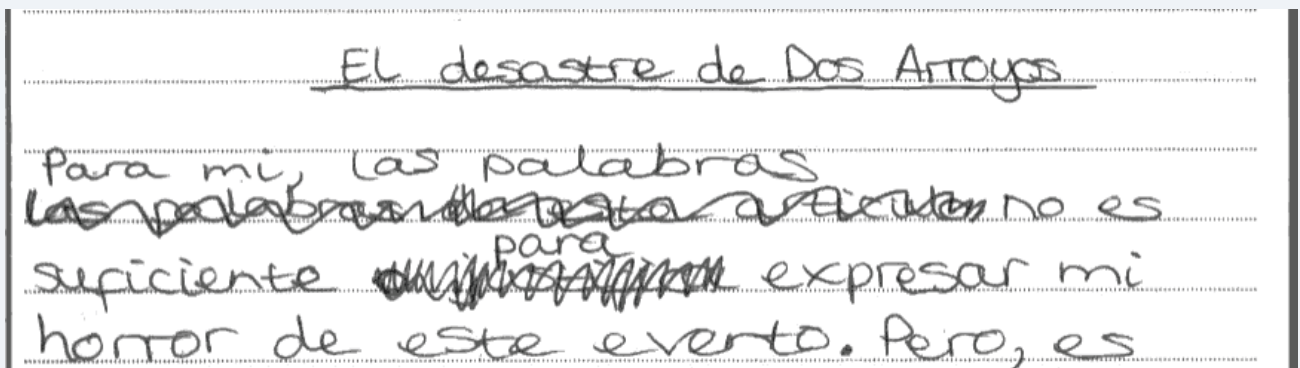


### Text 8

The stimulus for this writing question was a text about an earthquake. Many candidates rose to the challenge of imagining themselves in this situation, although some described hurricanes or floods. It was pleasing to see that there had been a lot of sound preparation for this type of question, with bullet-points being addressed and far fewer essays exceeding the word-length. The essays are marked first for content (out of 15) and then for language (also out of 15). As long as the quality of the language does not impair communication, it does not affect the content mark.

### Content

The best essays were written in a journalistic style with a title. It was disappointing that so few candidates made any effort to make the piece sound like the article it was supposed to be. A surprisingly large number were written as letters. Although there was no penalty for the incorrect format, credit was given to those who had tried to give a journalistic flavour to their writing. Some articles showed traces of pre-prepared essays on the environment, where whole paragraphs were given over to discussing the influence of climate change on natural disasters.



This candidate has opened with a simple, but effective headline and an emotive, attention grabbing first sentence. From the first moment this candidate is aiming at the category of 'convincing' which is one of the criteria for the highest mark band for content: '13-15: Task fully grasped, answer wholly relevant, convincing and well developed.'

For the first point, candidates had to explain why they had been in the region at the time of the disaster. This was often the point dealt with least well, with many articles beginning with some variation of 'estaba en la región de vacaciones' and no further development. The very best essays went into more detail about family connections, honeymoons, journalistic assignments etc.

terremoto. He trabajado en la ciudad de Dos Arroyos para tres meses, para ~~voluntariado en un colegio~~ tener experiencia en otras comunidades. ~~Al tiempo a la vez~~  
Trabajé en un colegio de estudiantes con discapacidades. Mi experiencia era muy emocional con los alumnos. Empezé formar una <sup>relación con cada</sup> ~~conocimiento~~ ~~relación~~ persona. Desafortunadamente, ~~la~~ <sup>mi</sup> última

Continuing from a successful opening, this candidate's first point is 'well developed', featuring a lot of detail, which again helps to make the article 'convincing'. Compare this with 'Estuve en la región para una semana a visitar mi amiga del colegio' and you will see that although the second candidate has fulfilled the requirement of the bullet point, s/he has not gone far enough to be considered 'well developed'. A similar beginning in the next example, is expanded into a fuller answer.

• Hace tres días visitaba una amiga ~~de~~ ~~de~~ La encontré  
cuando fui a universidad en España por un año. Cada  
año la visito y vamos a compras y me muestra edificios  
famosos en el barrio. Normalmente vamos a  
Madrid o Barcelona por dos o tres días. Me gusta visitarla  
y <sup>esos</sup> ~~estos~~ lugares porque me encanta España y el cultura. <sup>57</sup>

This point may not rank as high as 'convincing', but it is definitely in the mark band '10-12: Task understood and developed successfully'.

In the second point, candidates were asked to describe what happened. As usual there were many who wrote at great length to recount the story, leaving little space to cover the other bullet-points. There was a wide variety of descriptions of being awoken in the night with vibrations or of houses falling down and helping to search under rubble for survivors.

cultural. Un día tras despertarnos y tomar el desayuno sentimos unas pequeñas vibraciones, pero como de un piso de arriba con la música alta, pero no le dimos importancia, pero al minuto siguiente comenzó a vibrar más y más, entonces nos refugiarnos en la planta superior debajo de la cama, mesa y columnas.

Cuando por fin salimos a la calle y estaba todo destruido. Oíamos a la gente y corriendo vamos ayudando quitando piedras, estructuras de la casa, tal como se pedia. Uno de mis amigos de tanto ayudar se fisuró el tobillo, pero aun así seguía ayudando.

This candidate has taken us through the entire event, describing what s/he could feel, see and hear. Again this is squarely in the 'convincing and well developed' band. The next candidate has a more modest attempt to describe the results of the earthquake rather than the event itself: 'Muchas personas son herido o muerto y muchos niños son sin padres porque esta desastre.....Muchas personas viven ahora en las calles con no dinero y no comida o agua.'

The third point requested the candidate's feelings about the tragedy. This was covered only briefly by weaker candidates, e.g. 'Estoy muy triste', 'Desde mi punto de vista pienso que es un lastima que estos personas tienen vivir con ese...'



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Examiner Tip

There is almost always one bullet-point which asks for feelings, emotions, opinions or advice. Candidates should have a variety of expressions to cover this. They should be able to say that they are (or someone else is) sad, happy, angry or shocked etc. They should be able to use expressions such as 'hay que', 'tener que' and 'deber', as well as subjunctive constructions like 'es importante que el gobierno actúe/ que los padres entiendan'.

The final point is to suggest what the public can do to help. Many candidates took advantage of the stimulus passage and recycled most of the ideas about campaigns and donations. The best used their own words.

Para ayudar a las pobres familias afectadas por esta catástrofe natural, por favor, presten su ayuda y envíen ropas que no necesiten comida o (dormitorios) donen dinero. Todo tipo de ayuda se recibe con los brazos abiertos ya que, aunque sea poco para ustedes, es mucho para las familias que han perdido sus hogares y a sus queridos. Estamos haciendo todo lo posible por ayudar.

This candidate has avoided the vocabulary used in the stimulus, but definitely made an appeal that lies in the 'convincing' category.

## Language

The language used in the example previously shown is also excellent. The sentence starter 'Para ayudar' is a nice alternative to the more conventional subject/verb beginning (another interesting opening was 'Lo que más se necesita..'). There is a range of structures: the subjunctive, the reflexive as a passive: 'se recibe', the present continuous and rich vocabulary: 'con los brazos abiertos', 'presten ayuda', 'pobres familias', 'catástrofe natural'.

Many, many candidates had trouble manipulating the preterite. In past series the verb 'ver' has proved a stumbling block, this time 'oír' was beyond the capabilities of most, appearing in a whole range of combinations of 'o's, 'i's and 'y's. When the preterite forms were right, there were still mistakes with usage: 'cuando lo ocurrió' was seen several times and 'pidieron' was used for 'perdieron' quite often. The imperfect was handled better, although there were many instances of 'había/habría' and 'podía/podría' being muddled up.

**ResultsPlus****Examiner Tip**

Candidates should structure essays using paragraphs, write as neatly as possible and take special care to differentiate between the letters a, e and o. This exam is marked on-line, so scripts that have been written in pencil or, in pencil first and then over-written in ink, are very difficult to read. As per instructions on the front cover of the exam paper candidates must only write in black ink or ball point pen.

## Statistics

### *Unit 2: Understanding and Written Response in Spanish (6SP02)*

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	70	54	49	44	39	34
Uniform boundary mark	140	112	98	84	70	56

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a Grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range 0-55.

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