

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE Spanish (6SP03) Paper 1A

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Format of the test

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections and lasts between 11 and 13 minutes.

The first section is a debate and requires candidates to present and to take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. The examiner then plays devil's advocate, adopts the opposite view to the candidate and provides strong and meaningful challenges to allow candidates to defend their views and to use the language of debate and argument.

At the end of this section, the examiner indicates that the examination is moving to the second part of the test and moves away smoothly from the debate in part one, to the discussion in part two, by asking a link question that leads from the initial issue into an area associated with the initial issue.

In some cases it is acceptable to move to the second part of the test by moving to a completely different topic and making an appropriate remark to that effect "*Ahora vamos a hablar de algo completamente diferente. ¿Qué opinas de...?*"

In this second part of the examination candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to engage in a natural, unpredictable (but not unfamiliar) and meaningful discussion of two or three follow up issues. During this section the examiner should encourage the candidate to express their views on the issues raised.

The aim of this unit is set out in Section A, page 6, of the Specifications. Candidates are expected to interact effectively with the teacher/examiner, defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher examiner moves the conversation away from the chosen issue. Centres are reminded that the test is an examination of the candidate's ability to use language spontaneously in largely unpredictable circumstances.

Assessment Principles

The test is assessed out of 50 marks

Response - 20 marks

There are three descriptors in this box.

- Spontaneity. Is the discourse spontaneous or pre-learnt? To what extent?
- Abstract concepts. Can the candidate engage in abstract concepts not purely concrete exchanges? Is the discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive?
- Range of lexis and structures. Does the candidate have a good range of lexis and sentence structures appropriate to the issues discussed?
- Candidates will score well here if the test is a genuine discussion and not only a sequence of pre-arranged questions and answers.

Quality of Language - 7 marks

This box assesses accuracy of language, pronunciation and intonation.

Reading and Research - 7 marks

This box assesses the candidate's level of awareness and understanding of both general issues and the chosen issue for debate.

Candidates need to undertake research into their chosen issue and read widely around other topics in order to be able to demonstrate awareness and to be able to formulate their opinion and justify their arguments.

Comprehension and development - 16 marks

There are two descriptors in this box:

- The ability to understand the spoken language. Can candidates understand all the implications of the questions put to them?
- The ability to develop the responses. Can candidates respond demonstrating understanding, take the initiative and move the discussion forward?

Candidates will score well here if they have no problems understanding the questions and if they develop the discussion by offering further paths for development.

Candidate's performance

The majority of Centres had a good understanding of what was required of this unit and most of their candidates were well prepared. There was a wide range in quality in the performances heard. However there were many fine and very competent performances noted.

It is very important for Centres to remember that successful outcome for candidates in this test is closely related to and often dependent upon the way the teacher examiner conducts the examination. The following observation from tests submitted this summer illustrates this point.

Some examiners allowed their candidates to recite long monologues learnt by heart without interruption and at times it appeared that they had colluded with candidates. Such practice merely indicates a lack of spontaneity and an over reliance on pre-learning. In such instances candidates' marks will have been affected. Candidates should be told that they will be expected to discuss any of the issues they have worked on in class, at home or currently in the news. The precise issues to be discussed in their exam and how they are going to be treated constitutes the unpredictable nature of the test and thereby ensures that candidates' responses are spontaneous.

Candidates will not score highly if centres use the same issue for all candidates and/or the same set of topics and questions.

Occasionally some candidates did not answer the question put to them but rather produced answers to questions they would have liked.

For example:

-¿Se debe prohibir la venta del tabaco?

- El Estado nos protege porque el tabaco causa muchos muertos.

This answer does not answer the question as the candidate has skipped pertinent points before reaching the conclusion.

However, it was very pleasing to note that most candidates approached the test with confidence and responded readily and fluently to all questions asked and they were able to develop their replies without too much reliance on or prompting from the examiner.

The debate

More able candidates had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support their arguments. They also had good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. Weaker performing candidates simply relied on assertion, generalisations or personal conviction to pull through and consequently all too often ran out of ideas and tended to repeat their arguments.

The discussion

In this part of the examination more able candidates were well informed and aware of current issues, could express their opinions clearly, analyse and justify their points of view with examples or evidence and develop their responses. Some excellent examining was heard from many centres where examiners asked probing questions in no more than two or three follow up areas which allowed their candidates to produce the necessary detail and depth in their responses. All areas introduced for development were well linked and followed a natural course in ensuing discussion.

The following are two good examples for the oral tests:

Chosen Issue: A favor de la legalización de la marihuana

Follow up areas: Crimen

Inmigración

Los medios de comunicación y la forma de retransmitir las noticias

Chosen Issue: A favor de la cirugía plástica

Follow up areas: La importancia de la moda y el poder de las marcas

El trabajo infantil en los países en vías de desarrollo

La sociedad consumista de hoy

Teacher examiners must remember that the discussion entails an interaction and simply introducing topics and asking one question, after another question without listening to the candidate's response will hinder the candidate. In some instances there were as many as 10 unconnected

topics were covered. These examinations were more interviews than discussions and were not what is expected or required.

Examiners must also be aware that questions concerning the candidate's future plans can only be relevant if they lead on to a more in-depth examination of topics like unemployment fears or the value of tourism/ effect of tourism on the environment.

The follow up areas for this part of the examination can be chosen from the Additional General Topic Areas for A2 as well as from the General Topic Area for AS. However for a candidate to access the higher marks, AS topics visited at A2 should be considered in greater depth and answers given to questions should clearly indicate progression from AS to A2. Occasionally teacher examiners conducted the first part of the exam (the debate) correctly but for the second part (the discussion) they asked AS type questions carrying out a re-run of the Unit 1 speaking test and thereby not giving the candidates any chance to develop their response appropriately.

Examples of this practice are listed below

1. An example of an exam that had both too many topics and unsuitable questions.

Chosen Issue: *Estoy en contra de la legalización de la marihuana.*

Discussion:

- *¿Qué opinas del alcohol?*
 - *¿Cuáles son los efectos?*
 - *¿Qué opinas del tabaco?*
 - *¿Qué opinas de fumar en lugares públicos?*
 - *¿Qué es más peligroso el tabaco, el alcohol o las drogas?*
 - *¿El consumo de tabaco ayuda a evitar el estrés?*
 - *¿Qué causa el estrés en los jóvenes?*
 - *¿Tu quieres ir a la universidad?*
2. Good examples of questions suitable for A2 level relating to the use of technology, a common AS topic.
 - *¿De qué manera es Internet una puerta abierta al mundo de la comunicación?*
 - *¿Qué opinas de los programas de mensajería en la red?*
 - *¿Qué posibilidades y peligros ofrecen las salas de chat?*
 - *¿Piensas que Internet es sinónimo de pérdida de privacidad?*
 - *¿Crees que internet y los móviles hacen la pérdida de la comunicación tradicional inevitable?*
 - *¿Cómo ha cambiado el ordenador el mundo del estudio y del trabajo?*
 - *¿Qué aislamiento social puede provocar la tecnología en los jóvenes?*
 - *¿Cómo puede afectar la conducta de una persona el uso regular de videojuegos violentos?*

Suitability of Topics/ Issues

The range of issues chosen for the debate was fairly wide. The most successful topics tended to be those that had a moral and/or ethical dimension and which had several possibilities for development. Some issues chosen for the debate were opinions rather than debatable points and as such could not create a meaningful argument.

The most popular issues were abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration, homosexual marriages and the legalisation of drugs.

Other interesting issues presented this year were:

- *Una educación universitaria no garantiza el éxito*
- *Contra el aumento en la edad de jubilación*
- *Contra la píldora del día después*
- *A favor de construir una mezquita en la zona 0*
- *En contra de Formula Uno en Bahrain*
- *A favor de la invasión en Libia*
- *La piratería de la música no es mala para la industria discográfica*
- *En contra de que haya animales trabajando en los circos*
- *A favor de aplicar un impuesto anti-obesidad en Inglaterra*
- *A favor de la cirugía plástica*
- *Contra la criminalización de la prostitución*
- *A favor de construir un nuevo aeropuerto para Londres*
- *La religión solamente crea problemas*

Unsuitable issues were those that were not arguable from both sides or ones where candidates were simply expressing personal opinions and there was not enough evidence to support their arguments, such as:

- *Todo el mundo debería cambiar sus dientes por dientes falsos*
- *En contra del machismo*
- *Todos los niños deberían estudiar en un internado desde los 3 hasta los 18 años*
- *A favor de la vida sana*

There were a few examples of unclear stances such as '*La anorexia es una enfermedad física y psíquica*' and '*Las madres solteras*'

Popular current follow-up topics for the discussion were:

- University fees
- The Olympic Games in 2012
- The economic crisis
- The European Union
- The French elections
- Privacy laws

Quality of language

Common errors:

- Confusion of ser, estar and haber/ saber, conocer/por, para
- Incorrect verb endings, infinitives and gerunds.
- No verb at all 'no necesario' 'no posible'
- Gender of nouns, agreement of adjectives,
- Erratic subject/verb agreement.

More able candidates stood out with:

- Complex sentences with relative pronouns
- Use of phrases such as '*ya que*', '*entonces*', '*por eso*', '*por consecuencia*', '*no solo eso sino también*', '*sobre todo*', '*lo que quiero decir es que*' '*y además*'
- Correct comparatives.
- Correct use of pronouns.
- Correct and appropriate use of the subjunctive
- Correct verb endings, varied tenses
- Correct use of the reflexive
- Correct prepositions following verbs
- Natural use of conversational joiners like "*Lo que pasa es que....*" "*comprendo lo que dice pero....*" "*bueno en algunos casos pero en otros es....*"
- Lexis such as, *la industria peletera / de la noche a la mañana / retocar las fotos / la resonancia magnética / suscitar polémica / descartar / volar del nido / gastos de manutención / postrado en la cama / los peces gordos / las dos caras de la moneda / la fuga de cerebros / el poder adquisitivo / ser propenso a sufrir depresión / las directrices legales / adiestrados / un tema de gran envergadura / precios desorbitados / idolatrar* and others.

In some cases the pronunciation of some words, especially those close to the English, gave rise to some difficulty. For example:

difícil..fácil..idea..usan..policía..problema..variedad..sociedad..Europa..eutanasia.

Some confusion with:

- muy/mucho, mayor/mejor and menor
- words such as igualdad, mayoría, controversial, suportivo, serio, las medias, los resultados, los afectos, el mundo tercero, la destinación, las Olímpicas.
- expressions such as es depende, es vale, es necesita, es importancia, es ridículo, es puede, no es importancia, es debe que.
- English verbs given a Spanish ending: restringir, afrontar, acceder, permitir, soportar, promover, resolver.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the language of debate and teachers might like to introduce idioms that aid this kind of dialogue such as:

- *a mi parecer*
- *a mi modo de ver*
- *estoy convencida que*

- *admito que*
- *yo también lo veo así*
- *además, no solo eso sino también*
- *no se puede negar que*
- *lo que quiero decir es que*
- *hay excepciones, de acuerdo a*
- *según, no comparto este punto de vista*
- *no estoy de acuerdo con lo que dices porque*
- *entiendo lo que dice pero*
- *hay que tener en cuenta que*

Teacher Examiner's performance

Conduct of the examination

Most teacher examiners conducted excellent tests. They had carefully read the oral training guide, the Examiner's Report as well as the teacher examiner handbook and followed all the guidelines. To reward the candidate's ability to understand spoken Spanish these examiners asked clear, uncluttered and yet challenging questions using a variety of structures and lexis. They listened to the detail of what their candidates said and followed their lead.

However in a few cases teacher examiners spoke too much and asked long and some quite convoluted questions, interrupted or corrected the candidate, dominated the exchange. This was to the disadvantage of their candidates.

Timing

The specification is clear about the timing required for the Unit 3 exam. In Part 1, the debate, the candidate should introduce their stance for up to 1 minute, (it is not essential that the candidate uses the whole minute for this) after which the examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the examiner moves on to the discussion section (Part 2). The whole oral examination should last between 11 -13 minutes.

In the majority of cases the correct timing was observed.

Centres are reminded that it would be impossible and most unnatural for any discussion to adhere precisely to the quoted timings as there needs to be a smooth transition from one topic to another. Nevertheless, the timings of the examination should remain as close as possible to those indicated in the specification. Where the tests are too short an agreed penalty is applied and will result in a loss of marks. Where tests were too long examiner stopped listening at the end of the next sentence once 13 minutes had passed.

Centre Performance

Recording

The tests sent from centres were recorded appropriately on cassettes, CDs and USBs. All forms are acceptable. On the whole they were well labeled,

well packaged and accompanied by the OR3 oral form, correctly filled and the attendance register.

The quality of recording was, for most candidates, very clear although occasionally the examiners placed the microphone closer to the teacher examiner rather than to the candidate and as a consequence recordings were difficult to hear.

Documentation

A few centres did not send in their attendance registers.

Occasionally the OR forms included 'the stance on the issue' written in English rather than in Spanish as required.

Teacher Examiners

Advice and Guidance

- Candidates must choose a controversial issue that easily lends itself to debate and they must make sure it is phrased correctly, for example, *estoy a favor de...*, *estoy en contra de...*
- Candidates need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments.
- Examiners should challenge the candidate's views so that they are given suitable opportunities to demonstrate their ability to argue their case and justify their opinion.
- Candidates should not be given advance knowledge of the issues to be raised during the examination, or learn their answers by heart, as this lack of spontaneity will be reflected in the application of the mark scheme.
- Examiners need to ask sufficiently complex and challenging questions to allow their candidates to access the full range of marks available for Comprehension and Development. *Please note questions can be linguistically challenging or conceptually challenging. Complexity can be achieved through the response individual questions require.*
- Examiners must make sure that the second part of the exam is not a re-run of the Unit 1 oral test. For candidates to access the higher marks they must show progression from AS to A2.
- Examiners should not introduce too many follow up issues to allow the candidate to produce depth of discussion and development of opinions.
- Examiners should not correct, clarify or finish candidates' responses.
- Centres should not rotate the same two or three issues for all their candidates but rather personalise each examination for each individual candidate.

Conclusion

The outcome of the examination of this unit this summer was pleasing. The majority of centres had prepared their candidates thoroughly so they had a good understanding of the requirements of this unit. This allowed candidates to respond well to its demands.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the oral units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners have worked closely together to ensure their application of the common oral marking criteria is consistently applied across these three languages. This has been in response to queries from centres about the results at unit level on the oral examinations.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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