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## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Spanish 2696**

## *Specification*

**SPAN3      Listening, Reading and Writing**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## Administration

The examining team is pleased to be able to report that this first examination of the new specification has proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates, whilst differentiating effectively across the ability range. There were very few candidates who left questions completely blank, and equally few cases of the Cultural Topic essay being left unfinished, suggesting that most had sufficient time to complete the tasks. Clearly candidates had been well trained to manage their time appropriately as well as generally being well prepared to cope with the demands of the examination itself. The mean mark for the paper was 72.5.

On-screen marking was used for this unit and candidates should be reminded that they must answer the questions in the spaces provided, as instructed on the front cover of the question paper. It is also very important that the instruction to candidates to write in black ink or ballpoint pen is adhered to, as answers written in blue ink or pen are very difficult to mark on screen. Unfortunately, a few candidates were careless in their writing and some of the letters they used in answering the comprehension questions were very hard to decipher.

## Section A

### Listening Section

Of the four Listening questions, the first proved accessible to all, and the others were appropriately challenging more or less in equal measure.

#### Question 1

Most candidates handled this numbers item quite well. The number which caused most difficulty, predictably, was 7,500 in Question 1(c). Teachers would be well advised to practise numbers thoroughly with their candidates.

#### Question 2

This question presented few problems, with the overwhelming majority of candidates scoring very high marks. Only Question 2(f) proved tricky, providing a fitting challenge at the end of the item.

#### Question 3

D being given as correct instead of E was the commonest mistake, but over half the candidates scored very good marks.

#### Question 4

This was well done by the majority, with only Question 4(c) providing problems.

### Reading Section

The Reading section proved more demanding overall, with Question 7 proving the most challenging.

#### Question 5

This first question of the Reading Section, the gap-fill exercise, was quite taxing. Relatively few candidates choose *cuyo* where needed, however most chose *además* correctly in the final space. The majority of candidates scored over half marks, which is pleasing given that this was a such a challenging task.

### Question 6

This quite demanding text was tackled well by a considerable majority of candidates, with questions (d), (f), and (g) being done particularly well.

### Question 7(a)

Again, this was a challenging text, accompanied by two correspondingly demanding tasks. For 7(a)(i), some gave unlikely 'synonyms' such as *ilegal*, or even *chinos*. In 7(a)(iii) *fastidia* caused problems to many; as well as *molestia*, which is noun when a verb was required, wild guesses such as *inmueble* were frequent, showing a lack of comprehension of fairly common words. Most candidates performed well in this section, with questions a(iii) and a(iv) proving most problematical.

### Question 7(b)

In general, there were few problems with section 7(b), requiring answers to questions in Spanish. Many candidates 'lifted' answers, which is acceptable for this type of question. However, some candidates tried to form a sentence with too much of the original material, others with not enough, particularly in questions (b)(i) and (b)(v). Question 7(b)(iv) proved the most challenging with *estaban hartos* or a paraphrase being omitted by many. However, many picked up the mark by mentioning the desire to call attention to the presence of the illegal casino/kitchen. Some candidates tried - in a few cases unsuccessfully - to use their own words, which is unnecessary now that this type of question no longer carries marks for A03 - quality of language. Answers which communicate information which is reasonable and logical within the context are rewarded, but not those where communication is compromised. There were often careless copying mistakes which lost some candidates quite a few marks. A tiny number of candidates answered in the wrong language, but overall, candidates did quite well here.

Teachers need to be aware that a variety of tasks will be used in the Listening section and in Questions 5 to 7, and that the pattern of this examination will not necessarily be replicated in future examinations. However, Questions 8 and 9 will always follow the model of this examination.

### Question 8

In this translation from Spanish into English, examiners are looking for precision in conveying the meaning of the Spanish accurately. The passage is divided into 20 'boxes', each carrying one mark; the 'box' has to be rendered precisely and accurately to earn the mark. The total is then divided by two to give a mark out of ten; half marks are rounded up so, for instance, 5½ becomes 6/10. Hence, one error means losing the mark for a 'box' even if the rest of the 'box' is translated correctly.

There was a general lack of precision, particularly in the rendering of verb forms; some candidates seemed to wish to paraphrase rather than to convey accurately each meaning. The imperfect subjunctives, *que se restableciera* and *que se introdujeran* and especially the final sentence, caused a lot of problems, often being confused with the future tense. Perhaps candidates failed to cope with the passive element in these verbs. These phrases, together with the poor translation of *la convivencia*, were the reason why many candidates fared badly in the last quarter of the passage. However, it has to be said that examiners found it very surprising how many candidates were unable to cope with straightforward vocabulary such as *tras*, *barrio*, *periférico*, *alcalde*, *pedir calma*, *pelea*, *zona*, *negar*, *convivencia*, and *rogar*. There were some interesting and imaginative renderings of *el alcalde de Roquetas*. Other frequent stumbling blocks were *se trataba de* and *se tratará de*,

often translated as 'treated as'. There were a very few candidates who scored full marks, a number scoring 8 and 9, with the average being just under 5/10. Thus examiners saw a full spread of marks, proving this to be a task which differentiated very well.

### Question 9

This translation from English into Spanish is also divided into 20 'boxes', each carrying one mark. As in Question 8 the 'box' has to be rendered precisely and accurately to earn the mark, and the same arithmetical process is used to produce a mark out of 10. Once again there was a general lack of precision, but here incorrect spelling, gender and agreement led to low scores. There were the usual problems with tenses, especially where the conditional was involved, and examiners still find it surprising how many candidates are unable to deal with numbers, in this case *third, 8 billion, 70* which were all often wrong. Even more disappointing is the lack of familiarity with the topic-specific vocabulary such as *parque eólico, aerogeneradores, ecologistas, nocivo/dañinos, ministerio del medio ambiente* (the latter in lower case and usually with *medio ambiente* as one word). Some excellent candidates demonstrated how comfortable they were with such vocabulary, but again, there were some issues with general vocabulary. Expressions such as 'not far from the coast', 'producers', 'one of the world's...', *portavoz, medidas, ministro/ministerio* (and the distinction between them), *gobierno, invertir, billones* (followed by *de*), *tecnología* caused difficulties. Careless and sometimes inconsistent spelling mistakes such as *tecnologia, emisiones, aerogeneradoras* often lost marks for the section concerned. Thus, for example in section 9(b) *proyecto* and *incluiría* provided a number of candidates with their only marks for the whole of Question 9. In another of the more straightforward sections 'one of the world's largest producers' proved difficult but the majority managed *energía renovable*. Section 9(e) was also tackled quite well apart from a lack of adjectival agreement, the frequent double – ss - in *emisiones* and dubious translations of 'harmful'. Notwithstanding all this, only a very tiny number of candidates scored 0, a mark of 4 was the mean, and there were some very good marks.

### Section B

#### Writing: Cultural Topic Essays

Examiners commented positively on the breadth of knowledge of most candidates of the Cultural Topics they had studied, and their ability to produce an extended piece of writing in generally good Spanish. There were some excellent essays which answered the question fully, developing the candidate's thesis progressively, supported by appropriate and properly evaluated evidence. Overall, the performance of candidates was impressive, but the following points are offered to help centres improve the performance of future candidates.

The emphasis with the Cultural Topic in this new examination is on answering 'the question, the whole question and nothing but the question'. There were too many prepared essays and answers to 'the question I hoped to get'. Candidates must learn to read the question therefore, and must analyse what is required by looking closely at the vocabulary of the question. Candidates are provided with a planning sheet: whilst they are not obliged to use it, they are strongly advised to plan their essays appropriately in response to the question. Key words such as *analiza* were frequently ignored, as was any decision as to the *most important* work or theme.

Most of the questions contained two elements, the second usually focussed on the personal response required from the candidate. Often the personal reaction element was either ignored completely or became the main focus of the essay. The latter was particularly true when discussing *¿Consideras a esta persona un héroe/una heroína o no?* in Question 11(b).

Answers to Questions 12, 13 and 14 gave the impression that some candidates were regurgitating critical analyses and opinions received from teachers that they did not really understand.

It should also be said that there were a few examples of rubric infringement, that is, for example, a candidate answering question 12 (on the work of a Spanish author) but with reference to a film director, or a candidate answering Question 13 (on a poet/playwright) but with reference to a novelist. As this was the first year of the specification it was decided **for this year only** to accept these essays and mark them according to their worth as if the question had been on their chosen topic or the topic had conformed to the specification. **However, it is essential that centres and candidates realise that in future years such an essay will be awarded 0 as it shows no knowledge relevant to the question set or the prescribed topic.** Very few instances of inappropriate source material were noted but, where these did occur (eg a film produced by a Spanish director but which was totally in English), the essay was awarded 0.

### **Question 10 - A Spanish-speaking region/community**

Relatively few candidates chose this option, and of those who did, most opted for Question 10(b).

Among the regions covered were: Andalucía, Bolivia, Canarias, Cataluña, Chihuahua, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Cuzco, Murcia, El Salvador and Vizcaya.

Many answers on 10(a) were quite well focused on the question, but equally, many answers to both questions suffered from a lack of focus and breadth and depth. In 10(a) most candidates felt that just a couple of references to tourism and agriculture sufficed. Examiners reported that 10(b) was the choice of less able candidates, native speakers or candidates who lived in or had lived in the region. In these cases there was a marked absence of depth and detail, but an abundance of generalities which are true of any Spanish region: sun, good beaches, bars, restaurants, tapas, night life and history, but again with little or no mention of specific places.

In both there were vague references to the present economic downturn but this was rarely linked effectively to whether this would affect long term prosperity or have a lasting negative effect on tourism. Both questions sometimes lacked specific reference such as to places, types of industry or relevant statistics. However, a large number of candidates produced good essays revealing evidence of serious study of the region rather than nodding holiday acquaintance. Candidates did seem to have taken on board the need to address both parts of the question, although sometimes only in the final paragraph as an afterthought. However, there were many who paid little attention to the need to provide a response to the second part of the question, giving their reaction and justification for it. In consequence, marks for the Region topic were generally lower than for the other topics, with relatively few in the 'Good' band, and most in 'Sufficient'. Centres need to be aware that analysis and evaluation are as important in this question as in any other.

### **Question 11 – A period of 20<sup>th</sup> century history from a Spanish-speaking country/community**

Again, relatively few candidates chose this option for their essays, and of those, Question 11(b) was usually slightly more popular. The preferred subjects were the Spanish Civil War, General Franco, the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Argentina, Juan and Eva Perón, and General Pinochet. A few candidates opted for the Transition or Juan Carlos. In 11(a) many candidates knew their facts and were able to assess the impact of their chosen events, but there was a tendency to consider all of the Civil War or the whole of Pinochet's

dictatorship rather than one specific event. In general the positive/negative impact was not well treated.

In 11(b), there was much biographical detail of protagonists but little analysis of their actions. Many candidates spent most of the essay discussing why they felt their chosen person was a hero or not. Some essays, for example on Cuba and Castro, were very good, but most were in the 'Sufficient' category. Of the essays on Juan and Eva Perón most went beyond what one would glean from just watching "Evita" on screen or stage.

In general examiners commented that some centres chose a period which was too wide, (la Guerra Civil, for example), and then had difficulties picking out the most important events. Some candidates simply recounted what they knew of the war until they ran out of time or paper. Teachers and candidates need to be clear about the fact that what is really required is a discussion of one or more event(s) or person(s), rather than lengthy 'broad-brush' narratives which skate over several events without going into much depth about any of them.

### **Question 12 – An author from a Spanish-speaking country/community**

This option was surprisingly not a particularly popular one; of those who chose it, the split between question 12(a) and 12(b) was fairly even. 12(a) was generally better done than 12(b), where candidates often just wrote about themes and gave techniques only a passing reference. At least, most did avoid the temptation just to re-tell the story.

Gabriel García Márquez was the most popular in the choice of author, followed by Laura Esquivel, Miguel Delibes (*Pascual Duarte*) and Ramón Sender with a handful of candidates choosing Isabel Allende and Juan Rulfo. *Lazarillo de Tormes* was chosen by a few. Examiners were left with the impression that in some cases candidates seemed simply to have seen films of the books, rather than actually reading the books for themselves.

In 12(a) many candidates did not understand the difference between characteristics and character and discussed only the latter. Many simply described the characters in the book in turn and what they did, but said little about what reaction they provoked in the reader.

In 12(b) although these essays were generally slightly better than those for 12(a), few candidates were able to discuss or illustrate a range of literary techniques. References to *realismo mágico* where relevant rarely gave the impression that the candidate really understood what this involved. Most essays were more about themes than techniques, and many ignored the second part of the question. Once again most essays were adequate rather than very good.

### **Question 13 – A dramatist or poet from a Spanish-speaking country/community**

Along with Question 14, this was the most popular option, with 13(a) being more popular than 13(b).

Federico García Lorca was the most popular choice by far; most essays were on one or more of his trilogy of plays, with *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* being the most popular choice. Among others, there were some essays on Pablo Neruda, Antonio Machado and Fernán Gómez *Las Bicicletas son para el verano*.

Of the essays answering question 13(a), the best were those which only focussed on one theme, but in great depth and detail. There were also some good pieces reviewing more than one theme and then selecting the most important one, often only in the concluding paragraph, which is however not advisable. The second part of 13a (*¿Qué relevancia tiene para tí?*) was often very superficial and not really related to the text. The most able candidates did examine universal themes/values, whilst others made a much more personal

and therefore often trivial response. Examiners had hoped for a more general exploration of *relevancia*, such as 'It is relevant today because it shows how women used to be oppressed.' In answer to 13(b), *intereses y preocupaciones* were often not clearly understood or were treated superficially, frequently without justification from the text. Typical answers mentioned that 'Lorca was worried about repression because he was homosexual', but without a wider examination of his broader interests and concerns.

Candidates answering on Lorca were the worst offenders in terms of re-telling the story and writing everything they knew about the play(s) studied rather than focussing on the question. A few of the Lorca answers made it into the top band but the best marks were often gained by candidates who covered a less popular writer such as Machado.

#### **Question 14 – A director, architect, musician or painter from a Spanish-speaking country/community**

Along with Question 13, this was the most popular choice of topic, with 14(a) the question chosen by most candidates. 14(b), though less popular, was much better done by those who did opt for it. Most of these essays were on film directors, followed by artists and architects, but very few musicians.

Pedro Almodóvar was the clear favourite among directors, but Guillermo del Toro and Alejandro Aménabar were also well represented. There were a some fairly weak essays which described rather than analysed the chosen films, or sketched over several rather than focussing in more depth/detail on just one or two.

Of the available artists Picasso and Dalí had a number of followers, and there were some essays on Frida Kahlo. There were some excellent, in-depth pieces on *Guernica*, and a few very weak ones on the same work. Other Picasso pieces were also quite weak and focussed mainly on the artist's life rather than his work. There were some weak essays on Dalí in 14(b), which simply described his life and influences but without saying what ideas they of the artist they related to.

Gaudí was pretty much the only architect featuring; again, there were some very nice detailed pieces on *La Sagrada Familia* but others where one would find it hard to envisage the building described had one read the essay without any previous knowledge of the place.

In answers to question 14(a), too often also (as with essays on Lorca) time was wasted on a potted biography of the director/artist. Few candidates made any attempt to explain why they thought that the work(s) they had chosen were the most important.

However, this topic overall produced some of the best answers, though some were mediocre with much narrating of elements of a film's plot or a work of art, with little analysis. There was a greater degree of reaction and response with this topic than others, though some candidates ignored this element completely.

For this topic, candidates should refer to work produced by one person; a film on which two directors worked in collaboration, for example, would not be appropriate.



## General

The level of language in the Cultural Topic essays was generally quite reasonable, although this was one section of the examination in which the handful of candidates who should never have been entered stood out; equally the usual cluster of native speakers, who seemed to have been entered with optimism by centres who had not actually been able to prepare them for the demands of the examination. It was a shame however, that so many candidates seemed not to have practised writing in the foreign language on these cultural topics and were short of appropriate topic-orientated vocabulary.

Some candidates from across the ability range seem simply to have learnt a model essay. There were some very good essays of 6 or 7 pages, in very good Spanish, but which got Content marks in the Sufficient or Limited bands because they did not address the question chosen. Equally, many ignored the second element of the task set and did not provide their reaction and justification for it. Candidates need to realise that good marks are not gained simply by writing 7 or 8 pages; it is essential to address the question.

It is worrying to see how many candidates appear not to know how to plan and write an essay. Although examiners do not necessarily expect a conventional essay structure, it does make an essay much clearer and easier to follow the candidate's ideas, and of course it makes progression to the conclusion much more convincing. If teachers were to impart this technique: introduction, development in the main body of the essay, and conclusion, it would help candidates focus much better on the question.

In spite of all of this, it is encouraging that so many candidates have shown that they can write essays in Spanish of a high quality, with appropriate vocabulary and structures. All too often, however, such candidates did not access the higher marks for the language categories because their lack of focus on the question, leading to reduced Content marks, which also affected their language marks.

Finally, centres are reminded that AQA now advises candidates to write essays on every line rather than on alternate lines.

## Conclusion

To sum up in a very few words of advice to future candidates and to teachers preparing them: pay attention to detail in every part of the examination, particularly to spelling and grammar in Questions 8 and 9 and the Cultural Topic essays, and in the latter, learn to write efficient answers which focus on the question and the question alone. Encouragement should be taken that so much has been achieved already by most candidates, which seems to indicate that improvement is possible.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.