



General Certificate of Education

Spanish 1696
Specification

SPAN1 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination
2011 examination - January series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

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.

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

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

General Comments

This examination was very well done by the majority of candidates; there are clearly some highly talented linguists in our schools and colleges. The mean mark for the paper was 79.6.

The Listening and Reading sections were handled very well by most students. The Writing section, however, was not as good as one hoped to see; the majority chose to answer the essay about television and although the standard of written Spanish was generally satisfactory, the depth of content was not. It is understandable that re-sit students will not have spent much time revising AS content but in many cases it did affect their mark.

Section A

Listening Section

Question 1 ¡Los beneficios del vino!

The first question, as always, requires a response in English and, happily, we saw far fewer in Spanish on this occasion. Candidates found the exercise relatively straightforward and made a confident start to the paper. As has been noted in previous examiners' reports, candidates often fail to gain marks because of imprecision or incorrect wording/syntax and the following exemplify this. In (a) we saw **to be healthy** instead of **to improve health** and in (d) the belief that wine is essential in **food** rather than **with meals**. The most common error in the question was the misspelling of **lose**. Fewer had difficulty spelling **weight** but the variations were there. Elsewhere in the question there was some confusion over whether Cleopatra bathed in milk or merely drank it and those who would like to bathe in milk ranged from **nephews** through to **Cleopatra's boyfriends**.

Question 2 Enrique, Rafa y Antonio

This question on the products advertised by three Spanish superstars did not cause many difficulties. Only section (h) caused any problem and that was only for some 20% of the candidates.

Question 3 Los peligros del teléfono móvil

The question on the risks posed by mobile phones discriminated better. Certainly, fewer than half of the candidates realised that the answer to (c) was N as hands-free communication in a car was not mentioned at all and many struggled with (g), perhaps being unsure of the meaning of *encendido*. Parts (f) and (h) also caused difficulty.

Question 4 ¿Tu pintalabios revela tu personalidad?

This style of question discriminates very clearly between those who have an excellent command of Spanish and those whose grasp of the basic principles remains tenuous at this level. The advice to candidates on this type of question continues to be: **Answer the question succinctly by reproducing the correct section straight from what is heard and do not add more than is necessary. Incorrect Spanish can mean that you fail to gain the mark if the answer does not then make sense.** All answers are necessarily contained in the spoken material and no grammatical manipulation is required at all. It is not a difficult exercise in Spanish if candidates understand clearly the basic pronunciation rules of, for example, ca, ce, ci, co, cu and ga, ge, gi, go, gu.

The most common spelling weaknesses were seen in *Alemania*, *alemana*, *autoconfianza*, *apariencia*, *atención* and *quince*.

The section that created most surprise was 4(h) where it was extremely common to see the most improbable and unexpected answer *basuras exista*, rather than the correct *basura sexista*. What was supposed to be a simple and vaguely amusing end to this part of the paper proved to be a good discriminator of listening and writing skills.

Reading Section

Question 5 Las nuevas tecnologías

The Reading section of the AS paper usually begins with a straightforward, confidence-building question and this selection of newspaper headlines based on communication technology was not over-demanding. Only section (g) caused any difficulty.

Question 6 Costa Rica

This multiple-choice question on some of the positive aspects of Costa Rica proved more challenging for those with vocabulary weaknesses, but the candidates' broader knowledge of vocabulary enabled them to answer accurately in most cases. Section (d) caused difficulty with only 40% selecting the correct answer from the three very different options and the slightly more challenging vocabulary of *aficionados*, *pájaros* and *extinto*. Section (f) was answered incorrectly by over a third of candidates who, again, had three varied ideas from which to choose.

Question 7 Guillermo de Inglaterra

This cloze test worked well and quickly revealed those candidates whose knowledge of vocabulary and grammar still has some way to go. Part 1 required a feminine singular noun to follow the definite article and although there were two, *tristeza* and *alegría*, some candidates opted for *querida*. Part 2 required the selection of one of the two past participles to follow *han*. Part 3 did not have a distractor but the vocabulary was more difficult; any candidate able to spot the accent on *recordó* should have had no difficulty. Part 4 was difficult for those who did not recognise *incluyo* as the first person present of *incluir* and Part 5 was also more challenging as it fell within a more complex sentence and required the knowledge of the *seguir* + present participle structure and of the verb's irregular first person present tense. Part 6 was a test of vocabulary which many got wrong due to the many words ending in *o* that were available to choose from. Part 8 also required a masculine singular adjective and, again, the selections made betrayed some fairly basic vocabulary weaknesses.

Question 8 No pierdas tu identidad

Over the past two years this style of question has been excellent in identifying the most able students; it appears simple but is not always so. On this occasion it discriminated a little less well, perhaps because candidates now appreciate that examiners are looking for total accuracy and understand that all the answers can be lifted from the text without manipulation. Those who do choose to use their own thoughts and structures are welcome to do so but they must realise that their answers have to be acceptable both in logic and grammar.

Section (a) was marked as incorrect for one third of the candidates. Many failed to understand the meaning of *cuarto* and copied out all four topics being discussed by the couple; others unwisely chose to ignore the accents on *cómo* and *llamarán*. Sections (b) and (c) were the two

most accessible parts of the question. Question 8(d) is a good case in point where the answer must be a logical response to the question; the answer *una empresa de construcción* or *para una empresa de construcción* is certainly not difficult but answers such as *exitosa con una empresa de construcción* or *carrera exitosa con una empresa de construcción* are not logical and gained no mark. Sections (e) and (f) were answered quite well but (g) caused difficulty for those who decided to opt for something wordier than the 'liftable' *me aburre*; whenever the indefinite article is required we see many possibilities/guesses and this examination's popular offering was *se aburre el golf*. Section (h) saw over a quarter of the candidates miss the mark due to inaccurate selection of the targeted sentence, copying out the entire target sentence *A cambio, para que odia* or other carelessness.

Question 9 Verbs and adjectives

In (a) only 40% of candidates knew that *agua* is feminine; in (b) only 10% were aware of the rule for radical-changing *-ir* verbs in the preterite; (c) found a reasonable majority comfortable with the gender of *amistad*; (d) was straightforward as both the preterite and imperfect were accepted; (e) caused great problems, perhaps because many did not appreciate in the heat of the moment that 2012 is in the future; *ha* and *había* were offered more often than the future of *haber*. The need for a present subjunctive in (f) was spotted by over half of the candidates but those who then added an accent and thus offered a preterite did not gain the mark. Parts (g) and (h) were handled well whereas (i) required the present rather than the past participle which was offered by most candidates. The masculine adjective was not a difficult option in (j) given that the gender of *papel* was visible via the pronoun later in the sentence but only 62% of the candidates gave the correct answer.

Section B

Writing Section

Students would do well to study the Mark Scheme for the essays which emphasises **relevance**, **depth of treatment** and **justification**; full appreciation of the meaning of these words would lead to better, more confidently written essays. Overall, the essays were rather disappointing but, of course, there was also some outstanding work which attracted full or almost full marks. Marks for structure, grammar and accuracy were higher than in the summer examination but the marks for content were often low because candidates failed to spend sufficient time thinking about how to tackle their chosen question before putting pen to paper. (The essay planning sheet is a valuable tool provided for all candidates. Examiners do not mark it and candidates are encouraged to use it).

Some very good answers came from Question 10 (*tareas del hogar*) where content points were quickly gained by stating what tasks were done by certain members of the family. The worst answers undoubtedly came from Question 12 where candidates gave generalisations about television that they did not justify or exemplify. Regrettably, the majority opted to do this question because, no doubt, as soon as they saw the word *televisión* their mind was made up. Some very good answers were seen to Question 11 (*crisis de salud*) where the stimulus material allowed candidates merely to expand on the consequences of, and remedies for, over-eating, over-drinking, drug taking and lack of exercise.

The quality of Spanish ranged as widely as ever from outstanding to poor. Most essays were of two to three sides in length, very few wrote more and certainly there is no need to do so; quality will always prevail over quantity.

Question 10 Uno de los principales motivos de discusión en las familias son las tareas del hogar. En tu opinión, ¿es importante y fácil dividir las igualmente entre todos?

Good answers to this question focused on the changing nature of families and of traditional gender roles over the past few decades with women now playing such a major role in the world of work. The more able candidates recognised how important it is to share tasks fairly among the household and many praised and/or criticised men for their participation at home. The role of children and teenagers in preparation for university and independent living was assessed sensibly by many thoughtful candidates. Of course, no essay works without justification and exemplification of arguments and this essay enabled candidates to state quickly and easily what tasks can be done by various members of a household in order to maintain or create family harmony. There was some good thought about the stereotyping of the sexes into certain areas such as ironing, washing, cleaning, tidying, house and car maintenance etc.

One essay from a candidate with good grammatical knowledge spent over two sides talking repeatedly about fairness, equality, justice, men, women and children but did not offer a single task in the entire essay to illustrate the points; generalisations cannot win an argument.

Question 11 ¿Piensas que hay una crisis de salud hoy en día?

There were some good answers to this essay. Very good essays were written based just on the areas outlined in the stimulus material by developing the consequences of individuals' abuse and lack of care for their own bodies. Those who wished to move beyond the stimulus material mainly spoke of smoking (some of it related to recent changes in the law in Spain) and to eating disorders. The *botellón* also got a good outing and was roundly condemned.

What was required of a good essay was, perhaps, the physical effects and damage to our bodies of a 21st century western lifestyle; the better answers spoke of irreparable damage to our mind, heart, lungs, kidneys and arteries by drugs, fatty foods and alcohol that appeal to many members of society and of the future cost to the community in trying to repair people's lives. Positive ideas came from the work being done in schools to improve meals and enhance awareness of the dangers of junk food, sweets, soft drinks etc.

Most candidates did offer an answer to the question posed but the answer was not always a logical conclusion to the arguments that had gone before.

Question 12 ¿Qué opinas tú de la televisión de hoy en día?

Many candidates chose to ignore the stimulus statements about television offering a constant diet of rubbish and proceeded straight to the question. However, whether ignored or not, the decision about the worth of television has to be based on the programmes that we watch. For many candidates this was not the case and there was a largely held but unjustified view that television is rubbish. What examiners wanted to see was evidence that would show why a candidate likes or dislikes television.

Good answers invariably focused on a range of examples of good and bad programmes. On the positive side, many suggested that the news, documentaries and children's programmes were of great value; David Attenborough and Dora the Explorer were the most frequently quoted 'good' programmes but rarely did candidates talk sufficiently about the content of them to justify why they regarded them as good.

The 'bad' programmes were almost exclusively *Gran Hermano* and X-Factor. Why they are regarded as 'bad' when they are or have been among the most popular programmes on television was rarely, if ever, explained. The essence of the task was to do just that, to justify why television is good or bad and to come to a conclusion via those views. With the enormous range of soap operas, chat shows, celebrity competitions, cooking, property, crime, period dramas, sports coverage and music channels that could have been discussed, it was obvious that not much planning time was spent before putting pen to paper.

The essays were largely full of generalisations about television being useful for relaxation, making us fat or obese and about adverts forcing us to buy things and thereby creating poverty in society. The government came in for frequent, unfounded criticism for allowing television to dominate our lives and there was an abundance of pre-planned and weak statements such as *Si yo fuera primer ministro, prohibiría todos los anuncios*.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Candidates must write using single line spacing when writing their answer for this section. Double line spacing (i.e. writing on alternate lines) must not be used. Those candidates who cannot complete their answer in the answer booklet must use additional answer sheets; they must not use the Essay Planning Sheet for this purpose as it is not sent for marking.

Essay Planning Sheet

The Essay Planning Sheet must be used for the plan only and will not be assessed. Essay Planning Sheets, together with any questions on inserts, must not be enclosed with the question paper and answer booklets when they are despatched for marking.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO THE WRITING QUESTION

Are candidates expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Candidates are not expected to include an introduction or conclusion, but it enhances the structure if there is a brief introduction and a concluding short paragraph, possibly including a personal response. One of the criteria is for a logical structure and this would enhance the overall structure of the essay.

Is a personal opinion valid as a point in the argument?

Yes, we give ticks for personal opinions as we consider them valid as developments.

Should each point/opinion be backed up with an example?

Generally, yes. There must be plenty of justification of points/opinions in order to gain marks in the higher bands.

Are the examiners looking for a certain number of points/opinions plus examples, eg 3 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 3 against with evidence?

This would be sensible but we have no hard and fast rule on this since a limited number of points very well illustrated and developed would also be considered for the higher mark bands.

How does the marking scheme work in practice? Is there a list of relevant points, some of which the examiners are expecting to be included? If so, how many represents poor versus sufficient/very good?

There is a list of relevant points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and candidates will get credit for well-argued points not in the list. Examiners tick every relevant, clearly expressed point and give further ticks for development/ examples/ opinions etc. Thus a list of bullet point type arguments with no development cannot access the highest mark band. In order to access the highest mark band, candidates must also ensure that they meet all the other criteria, eg their ideas are clearly expressed, there is a logical structure to the essay and they have answered fully the question set.

Is it just an instinctive overall rating of logical sequence and therefore individual points are not counted up?

There is no mathematical guide to Content marks - examiners have to make a decision based on the descriptors in the assessment criteria.

Web Pages

Centres 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).

These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, Reports on the Examination and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For SPAN1 the TRB includes for the Writing Section additional specimen questions (to supplement past papers from previous series) and candidate exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing candidates 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.