



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Spanish

SPAN1

(Specification 2695)

Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The overall standard of performance in this January paper was high. The mean mark for the paper was 77.98.

The Listening and Reading comprehension questions were completed well and appeared relatively accessible for many students. Students had a clear understanding of the question types and the level of vocabulary posed few problems. Question 9, the grammar question, was completed less convincingly and the essay gave the usual range of responses from outstanding to poor. Spelling and handwriting remain an issue. Students should be reminded that they must use black ink or black ball-point pen to complete their answers.

Section A

Listening Section

Question 1 Las vacaciones de Rafael y Elena

The first question, which must be answered in English, posed few problems. Just a handful of students answered in Spanish and scored no marks.

In (a) *luna de miel* was well known. In (b) the most common errors were to omit the essential 'kilometres' or to interpret *novcientos cincuenta* as 900 or 90. (c) was answered well but the English spelling of 'tourist', 'touristic' and 'cruise' was frequently poor. (d) caused obvious difficulty for those who heard *camiones* rather than *caminos*. Some opted for 'a guide book' rather than a 'guide'. In (e) a pleasing number of students knew *buceo* but those who needed to make a sensible guess often opted for 'boxing' or the rather less probable pastime of 'eating buffets'. For Rafael's other favourite hobby of *fotografía de la naturaleza*, 'natural photography' was not acceptable nor was the rarer 'photographing naturists'. (f) and (g) caused few problems as *miedo* and *amantes del sol* were straightforward vocabulary that allowed for a range of English interpretations. (h) was the least well answered of Question 1. Many offered 'shirt' and 'blouse' rather than 't-shirt' or 'top'. Other incorrect answers were 'topical' and 'tropicle' fish.

Question 2 Bienvenido al cine

(a), (f) and (g) caused some students to stumble but, overall, this passage about unacceptable behaviour in the cinema was well understood and accurately answered.

Question 3 Internet en cifras

Marks were high for this question, with all 8 parts being answered correctly by over 90% of students.

Question 4 Las botas *Doc Martens* todavía de moda

This question was answered well by those who 'lifted' concisely. For many students the desire to develop their own answer is understandable, but inaccurate manipulation of the text and grammar can all too easily invalidate the response. Regrettably, a small number of students answered in English and scored no marks.

In (a) the most able students knew that it was wiser to write out in full the answer *más de cien millones* rather than try to answer in the shorthand of figures; under examination pressure the number of zeros required in thousands and millions can easily be miscalculated. (b) caused difficulty; *suela llena de aire* was a challenging AS phrase; *suelo* was a common response but

there was a range of other misinterpretations around the speeding up of the healing process that left only half of the students with the mark. (c) caused difficulty with the spelling of *esquí* and of *accidente*. (d) was generally answered well, but there was also much *sangría* on offer instead of *sangre*. In (e) *baratas* and *fuertes* were two simple adjectives that were quickly taken by most students for the two marks but there was a disappointing number of careless *barratas* and *fuertas*. For (f) the straightforward *estadio de fútbol* was answered very well. In (g) the single word *Asia* was sufficient to gain the mark and only a few students gave the incorrect answer of the *fábrica británica* in the same sentence. (h) was the least successfully answered section of this question. Broad interpretations of the spelling of *enfermeras* and of *jueces* (*infermas, enfermedas, jueves, huevos, jefes, jefes* etc) left too many students without one or both marks.

Reading Section

Question 5 Actividades para quemar calorías

The first question in the Reading section of the paper was answered very well. The only sections to cause difficulty were (c), (d) and (g). In (c), *despacio* yet again caused difficulty despite having appeared in several recent SPAN1 papers. In (d) *césped* was found to be the most difficult of the vocabulary items and for (g) *footing* and *correr por las calles de tu barrio* were not always matched together.

Question 6 Venezuela prohíbe los videojuegos violentos

Overall students were able to spot very well the correct paragraphs that had to be chosen. The weakest answers were (b) where the first word *Ejemplos* had to be understood in order to choose Paragraph 6 rather than Paragraph 1, and (c) in which students opted for *comportamiento de la juventud* in Paragraph 3 rather than the more difficult *la crianza en el hogar* in the final line of the text. Part (e) also saw incorrect answers with *poner fin a* and *acabar con* not being seen as synonymous.

Question 7 La película "María, llena eres de gracia"

This question on the popular film being studied by many A2 students discriminated well. Pleasingly, some 28% of students scored the full 8 marks and a further 20% scored 7. Happily, those who scored only 1, 2 or 3 were in a tiny minority.

Question 8 La pareja perfecta en Navidad

This passage was answered well. As always, it was important to know just how much information to give in order to answer the question satisfactorily.

In (a) the reflexive pronoun was essential. (b), (c) and (d) were answered very well. For (e) due to the lack of understanding of *agotado*, students frequently offered *estaba demasiado cansado* instead of *seguir con la distribución de los regalos*. (f) was answered very well. In (g) the careless and incorrect *Papá Noel chocó con un camión* was a not infrequent answer. (h) was the most poorly answered section of this question. The careless 'lift' of *no existen ni Papá Noel* should have been avoided.

Question 9 Grammar

Following Questions 1-8 where, in general, students were scoring well, the level of success decreased here with only a quarter of students gaining a mark in some sections.

In (a) some students offered *la tercera* which was accepted but many others suggested *tercer*, which was incorrect. In (b) the major faults were the absence of the reflexive or of the essential accent. In (c) the present subjunctive of a regular reflexive -ar verb was required here but only a third of students were able to offer it in its correct form. (d) required the 3rd person future of *haber*, and it fared equally badly, despite allowing students to earn the mark even without the accent. In (e) the scores were low with most students not spotting the irregular past participle of *predecir*. (f) was done well with the careful students ensuring that the final 'o' of *norteamericanos* was clearly an 'o' that could not be mistaken for an 'a'. (g) was the most accessible of the ten questions and 84% of students answered correctly. (h) saw less overall success because the accent was essential so that the future did not become an imperfect subjunctive. Most students did put on the accent and that is pleasing. In (i) the past participle in agreement with its following masculine nouns was not an easy AS test and was the least successfully answered of the ten sections. The range of suggestions was wide but the infinitive was a popular choice. (j) required the present subjunctive of a regular -ar verb, following a verb of emotion. Just over half of the students scored the mark.

Section B

Writing Section

The essay continues to discriminate greatly between students. The most important advice to students is that there should be more time spent planning the essay before pen is put to paper, because quality always scores over quantity. Most students go well beyond the 200 word minimum limit but much would be gained by better planning. The mean **Content** mark was 11/20, which is in upper part of the Sufficient band in the mark scheme. Fewer unsubstantiated generalisations and many more concrete examples would improve Content scores.

The range of **Vocabulary** employed was often very good. Competence in basic and advanced grammatical **Structures** varied enormously; the failure to employ verbs confidently remains evident in many students' work. Alongside vocabulary, they are the basic building blocks of any sentence, and greater teaching emphasis on them will never go amiss.

Accuracy varied hugely, as it always does. One obvious example is the lack of correct or, indeed, of any accentuation from many students; it is a clear indicator of the student who really cares about the correctness of his work. As always, good handwriting enables both the writer and the reader to follow the argument more easily.

Question 10

This essay on the impact of soap-operas was the most popular of the three available to students. Crucially, some students failed to define the term 'soap-opera' in their initial planning and in the essay's introduction. Had they spent those crucial few minutes thinking about examples of English, Australian, American or Spanish 'soaps' and what the characters in them represent, the essays would have been much better. Because that did not always happen, there was a surprising number of essays on mini-series such as 'Desperate Housewives' and on television in general. Some chose a range of television programmes such as 'Frozen Planet' or 'Fawlty Towers' to try to make their argument.

The most able students sensibly mentioned specific soap-operas and characters in them to drive home the often gloomy points they were making about violence, aggression, alcohol, drugs, sex, unhappiness, arguments, divorce and so on; there was little evidence of happy or successful characters. Pleasingly, many stated that the real value of these programmes is that they can help viewers to feel supported if they are experiencing similar issues in their lives and many referred to the phone numbers of organisations shown on screen after certain episodes so that viewers affected by that day's drama can find help.

The need to name individual soap-operas and characters is important, otherwise the essay can become vague and thoughts "unjustified", to use the mark scheme terminology. Certainly, we learnt a lot about characters in 'Eastenders', 'Coronation Street' and 'Hollyoaks'. Many students were critical of characters and of story-lines but were clearly devoted followers of the programmes.

Disappointingly, too many students reverted to the notion that soap-operas are the cause of modern-day obesity, anorexia and bulimia; such arguments might appear in an introduction or conclusion about the overall amount of time that we spend watching television but they carry little or no weight in a specifically soap-opera context.

Question 11

This essay on stress was the least popular of the three but it was not the hardest to tackle and there were some outstanding answers from those who took the time to think and plan carefully. The most able students initially analysed why young people might be feeling stressed and then suggested some answers.

Many students are clearly of the view that the lethal combination of teachers and examiners should bear full blame for present-day teenage angst and no further analysis of the causes was needed or possible. Other students offered a wide range of causes of stress, from personal appearance and popularity to family disagreements and troublesome siblings, lack of money, university places, unemployment, future job prospects and the troubled world we live in.

The best answers focused on work/life balance. There were some splendid examples of how parents, family, friends, hard work, leisure activities, sport, diet, drugs, alcohol, sleep and organisation can help or hinder one's efforts to reduce stress and have an 'easier' life. Students were able to give lots of examples within these areas and the Content marks were gained with considerable ease.

Less able students stated that the solution to their excessive levels of stress can be found in the two words *relajarse* and *divertirse*. Their arguments were rarely convincing.

Question 12

This was the second favourite essay question. The majority of students were in favour of marriage and aim to get married. The best answers placed emphasis on the issues of love, trust, children, finance, stability, security and tradition. There was no shortage of sensible concern over the divorce rate and the financial and mental cost of divorce. Personal experience of broken marriages was not uncommon and the depth of treatment of the issue from such students was often good or very good.

Regrettably, for many students the word *matrimonio* meant little more than *boda* and many essays dealt with the wedding day rather than with marriage; it enabled the openly 'romantic' and 'traditionalist' student to launch enthusiastically into discussion of the cost of wedding dresses, rings, hire cars, photograph albums and the ideal place for a wedding to take place, a foreign beach seeming to be a frequent favourite.

This essay was a good example of how essay conclusions can sometimes appear illogical. Following firmly stated views that long-term relationships in modern-day society are very difficult, or even that marriage is 'dead', many hoped and believed that it would not apply to them, that they would fall into the category of 'successful couple'. Their optimism is probably encouraging.

Guidance for Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Students 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. Only those students 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 students expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Students 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 students 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, students 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

Schools and colleges 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 student exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students for future examinations. The Secure Key Materials section of our website also includes helpful information; Examinations Officers can give teachers access to this invaluable resource.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.