



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

Spanish

SPAN1

(Specification 2695)

Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It is pleasing to note that there was an increase in student numbers for the SPAN1 paper again this year. It proved to be of a similar standard to 2010 and 2011 and the results show that many students performed extremely well and, hopefully, enjoyed the challenge. For the less able students who need to improve further their basic listening, reading and writing skills, there were some questions to boost their confidence but they found others difficult. As ever, the essay question proved to be an important discriminator and students needed to be particularly careful in their choice of the three options (see below). The mean mark for the paper was 76.3.

Section A

Listening Section

Question 1 *Cómo encontrar el amor*

This question was answered well with good marks being scored by the majority of students. Unfortunately, more than a few answered in Spanish despite the clarity of the rubric.

Part (a) was answered well. Most students opted for 'was looking for' as their translation of *buscaba*, others preferred 'seeking' and 'searching for' and these were all accepted. Many, however, offered 'was finding' and that did not gain the mark.

In (b) students needed to have both 'life' and 'change' to score the mark and the tense needed to be in the imperfect or conditional, depending on the sentence structure chosen. It was answered well.

For (c) the vocabulary sought was 'improve' and 'German'. Many students chose 'to better' and that was accepted although it is not the term that is normally used in this context.

Part (d) was the most accessible question as it only required the translations of *deportes* and *idiomas*.

Part (e) saw many different translations of *creció*. Pleasingly, the most popular was the straightforward 'grew' but 'developed' and 'progressed' were other common choices and they were accepted as logical synonyms in the context of friendship. The adverb 'quickly' was required to secure the mark.

Part (f) needed a little care. All that was required was 'to marry Ana' but many students felt the need to embellish their answers and here some came unstuck by being too loose in their interpretation of what was said; 'because they had decided to get married' was not accepted because there was no indication in the passage that Ana had agreed to do so. However, 'to get married' and 'to propose' were accepted as these were deemed to be logical inferences of Karl's decision to fly to Bogotá.

In (g) students needed to offer a translation of *llegó* and either *aeropuerto* or *Bogotá*. In addition to 'he arrived' 'came to' and 'got to' were both accepted.

Part (h) was answered easily. Most were able to offer both the month and the year.

Part (i) proved to be less demanding; 'adapting to' and 'getting used to' were the best answers for the first element and 'perfecting' was the best for the second. The answer of 'improving' was not accepted.

Question 2 El festival de música de Glastonbury

Students answered this question well; the three choices for each part did not contain especially demanding vocabulary and only parts (a) and (b) caused any real difficulty. The most accessible element, with a 90% success rate, was part (c) *En 1970 ... 1.500 personas fueron al festival*.

In (a) there were distractors of tense *comenzó* and of figures '40' and '14'. The correct answer *empezó hace más de cuatro décadas* was certainly the most difficult structure of the three on offer.

Part (b) proved to be the hardest section of this question. Many students were obviously aware of Glastonbury's history of weather problems and opted for *sufre por la lluvia anual* rather than the correct *no se celebra en un estadio cubierto*.

Question 3 Mi mejor amiga, Adele

This question discriminated well. Parts (a), (c), (f) and (i) all had a student success rate of over 90% and part (e) was answered almost equally successfully.

Part b) caused some difficulty due to the confusion over the aural stimulus of *hace 20 años* and the written one of *a la edad de 20 años*.

Part (d) had a higher success rate with the majority not being distracted by *... su primer vuelo a la capital de España*. Although there was mention in the spoken text of the friends' trips to European capitals by train, there was no specific mention of flights or of Madrid.

Part (g) caused some difficulty; the spoken text included *¿Yo soy más inteligente que tú?* and this no doubt created uncertainty in the minds of some with the written stimulus *Carolina tiene mejores calificaciones académicas ...*

Part (h) was not answered especially well. Carolina states that *tenemos ... problemas inevitables* but this was not enough to justify that the written stimulus *Adele ha tenido más suerte en la vida que Carolina* is true or false and so the required answer was N.

Question 4 Alberto y Leonora hablan de las nuevas tecnologías

This comprehension question showed from the start that many students realised that they needed to understand the question and then to answer succinctly with the 'lift' available in what is heard. The questions are designed so that the answers can be quite short and immediately 'liftable'.

Part (a) required the name of the three types of business mentioned by Alberto in his first statement and these were quite straightforwardly, *tienda de discos*, *agencia de viajes* and *banco*. Answers such as *la última vez que entraste en una tienda de discos*, and *un banco para sacar dinero* are not logical responses to the question.

In part (b), in response to the question *¿Cuándo pueden ver los detalles de su cuenta bancaria?*, the perfect lift was *en cualquier momento del día* and this proved not to be difficult for most students.

Part (c) was very accessible and virtually everybody scored the mark by offering either *con un clic del ratón* or *por internet* or both.

In (d) In response to the question *¿Qué decidieron hacer para conseguir los discos ...?*, the 'liftable' answer was *descargarlos al móvil* and not *sólo tuvimos que descargarlos al móvil*. Students should limit themselves to the 'liftable' answer because expanding them so frequently

creates an answer that cannot be accepted. The best answers are concise, to the point, and neatly written in the space provided.

In (e) the correct 'lift' in response to *¿Qué hay en una de las aplicaciones de su ipad?* was *miles de novelas*.

In (f) many students gave insufficient thought to the question and to their answer. In response to the question *¿Qué dice Alberto de los periódicos tradicionales?*, a frequent answer was *podemos leer gratis toda la información que nos interesa*. That was incorrect and the correct answer came afterwards; *poco a poco están desapareciendo*.

In (g) the correct answer to the question *¿Qué ha llegado?* was *la era digital* and most students wrote that exact answer. Some struggled with the spoken *la era* and the most common incorrect suggestion was *la hera*.

Reading Section

Question 5 *¿Qué tipo de película te gusta más?*

This opening question to the Reading section was, as usual, a gentle lead-in to this section of the paper; many vocabulary clues were given in the quite lengthy descriptions of the film categories. Candidates answered (a), (b), (e) and (f) with little difficulty.

In part (c) which did cause problems, the adjective used in the category *cine mudo* seemed to be the stumbling block.

In part (d) the two issues that caused this section to be answered incorrectly were the phrase *defender su país o el mundo contra ataque* and the noun *espionaje*; only a full understanding of the stimulus material would lead to the correct answer of *películas de espionaje* rather than *películas de ciencia-ficción*.

Question 6 *Patito feo: una telenovela famosa*

This question on the Argentinian soap-opera was answered well. Pleasingly, over 80% of students scored 5 or more of the 7 marks available.

The most frequent incorrect answers came with option D where *parecen llevarse bien* had to be seen as synonymous with *tienen una vida armoniosa en casa* and option N where the phrase *tiene mucho sueño* was too frequently selected as a match for *logra cumplir sus cuatro sueños* in the reading passage.

Question 7 *El diario de Elena*

The written comprehension in the Reading section of the paper was not too demanding and generally students performed very well but they need to be reminded about the fact that no manipulation of grammar is needed in their answers provided that they opt for the simple 'liftable' answer that is in the text on the opposite page.

In (a) there was the choice of *diciembre* or *enero* as the 'decision' month for Elena to change her lifestyle. Most students correctly chose the former.

For (b) there were many places mentioned in the passage that could possibly be an answer to the question *¿Dónde le enseñaron a Elena?* and the correct answer *en la clase de biología* was found by the majority. Some suggested *en mi habitación*, *en el polideportivo* or *delante del ordenador* but they were pleasingly few.

Part (c) caused problems because many chose to expand their answer beyond the basic 'lift' from the passage. The simplest answer in response to *¿Qué no hará obsesivamente Elena?* was *contar las calorías* but many opted for far more lengthy, complex answers which required thoughtful manipulation of grammar in order to be both logical and acceptable.

Part (d) was accessible and almost all scored the mark with *vodka y sidra*. A handful chose *mucha agua* which was a distractor on the same line in the passage.

For (e) it was hoped that most would opt for *grasa saturada* as the answer and the majority did so. However, many students clearly thought that *pizza* and *comida rápida* were equally worthy of the denomination *comida basura* and they were also accepted.

Part (f) discriminated well because it was another example where too many students were unable to give the short, concise, correct answer. The simplest answer to the question *Para comer menos, ¿qué va a vigilar Elena?* was *el tamaño de las porciones* but many decided to extend their answer and got into all sorts of difficulties with *que le sirvo, que se serva, que me sirve*, etc.

In (g) most realised that *¿Qué desea hacer...?* in the question only required another infinitive to begin the answer and got the correct answer *dejarlo por completo*.

Part (h) caused no difficulty to thoughtful students. The simplest and best answer to *¿Qué hará Elena para sentirse menos deprimida?* was *perder siete kilos*. Once again, many chose to develop their answers; those who offered '*perderá*' were obviously rewarded with the mark, those who were unable to offer the correct form of the future tense were not.

Question 8 Vacaciones extremas en bicicleta en Bolivia

This question on the dangerous Bolivian road between La Paz and Coroico was challenging and a strong discriminator. Only 12% scored all 9 marks available and 12% scored 2, 1 or 0. The vocabulary of the passage was not too demanding but the passage needed careful reading.

With four relatively difficult infinitives to choose from (*caer, cumplir, esconder, recorrer*) and three of them needed after *tienes que, puedes* and *podré*, there was much guessing in evidence.

Masculine singular nouns were required twice with the articles *el* and *un* being easy indicators but some found the three options available (*camino, marco, paracaidismo*) at the higher end of difficulty at this level.

Those who correctly selected *sobrevives*, did well because the sentence *Hay muchos riesgos pero después, si, ¿puedes decir que lo has hecho!* is not straightforward.

Careful, attentive students were not distracted by the option of *pueden* for *no todos los ciclistas a completar los 64 kilómetros* and correctly selected *llegan*.

Question 9 Verbs and adjectives

(a) The basic rule that Spanish prepositions are followed by the infinitive has been tested many times and although over the past few years this question has most frequently used *a* and *de*, *en* was used this year. Most of those who do not know the rule opted for the straight translation of the English 'turning down' and offered *bajando*. But a very wide range of suggestions including *baja, bajó, baje* was seen.

(b) Irregular past participles are quite often tested in this section and this verb has appeared before. Unfortunately *rompido* was seen as frequently as *roto* and the noun *la máquina* caused many students to offer *rota*.

- (c) The present participle of the regular *-ar* verb *desarrollar* should have been welcomed by students and most did so. Those who were unable to work out how many times the letters 's', 'r' and 'l' occur in the word needed to look rather more closely at its infinitive at the end of the sentence.
- (d) This style of question has appeared before in this section of the paper and, pleasingly, most answered well. A handful of *fuemos* was seen but, by and large, the correct *fuimos* was offered consistently.
- (e) The need to use the regular *-ir* verb past participle in agreement caused much difficulty here. Many of the students who did not manage *dirigida* did get as far as *dirigido* but there was also a wide range of guesses of which *dirigí* was probably the most common. Some felt that it must be an orthographical-change 'trick' question and the letter 'j' appeared often in the answers.
- (f) A present subjunctive question is common in Question 9 and this was fairly straightforward after *¿Quieres que...* Some students who recognised the need for the subjunctive were distracted by the *te* next to the space to be filled in and suggested *ayudes* rather than the required *ayuden*.
- (g) Clarity of handwriting is sometimes a issue. The whole range is seen from really beautiful presentation to virtually illegible writing that examiners occasionally have to refer to senior examiners. The formation of the letters *o* and *a* are crucial in the written language and in this section students' awareness of the masculine nouns ending in *'-ma'* rule was expected to be known. Careful, alert students are well aware of this need for clarity and made a very obvious point of writing a perfect *otros*. Many thought that *tema* is feminine.
- (h) The plural adjective *grises* caused few problems. The noun *ordenadores* made it fairly straightforward. The main incorrect alternative offered was *gris*.
- (i) The orthographical change needed in the formation of the plural of *capaz* to *capaces* was generally well known.
- (j) The 2nd person imperative was the answer that was sought here but the 2nd person indicative was also accepted. Pleasingly, correct answers appeared most of the time. Some offered alternatives in the subjunctive.

Consistent and targeted practice in this type of question would help to improve students' performance in Question 9.

Section B

Writing Section

By far the most popular essay was Question 10 on technology; this outnumbered Questions 11 and 12 combined. Additionally, the question on sport was much preferred to the question on film which proved to be the most difficult of the three to answer well. Many excellent answers were seen in the technology and sport questions but few in the cinema question.

Many students write with commendable accuracy and fluency, demonstrating real mastery of the language and it was a pleasure to give full or nearly full marks on many occasions. At the other extreme, less able students offered few or illogical ideas and depended far too heavily on a word-for-word translation style that quickly betrayed their grasp of grammar.

Most essays were of a sensible length, some 2 to 3 sides. As always, some students preferred to offer quantity rather than quality but, happily, they were in the minority. Content was generally

Sufficient, Good or Very Good in the technology and sport areas but often Sufficient or Limited in the cinema/film area. Most arguments in the fields of technology and sport are now well rehearsed but, as always, the more able students had their own thoughts and when something fresh appeared it was welcomed. More able students appreciate that they must read the question carefully and answer it with examples; the rubric states "Back up the points you make" and in general students do this well. It is important that the student chooses carefully the question he/she answers and plans the structure; the lack of direction in most cinema/film essays was evident from the very outset.

The areas that betrayed basic grammatical weaknesses were the understanding and the formation of verbs, gender of nouns, adjectival agreement, *gustar*, prepositions plus infinitive, personal *a*, accentuation and use of capital and small letters.

The quality of handwriting attracted criticism from examiners who occasionally forwarded the essay to senior examiners for their interpretation. Additionally, some students choose to combine tiny or poorly formed handwriting with barely visible ink and students are reminded that they must use black ink or black ball-point pen to complete their examinations.

Question 10 ¿Tú piensas que hoy en día exageramos los riesgos y peligros de la tecnología?

This title enabled students to provide a balanced argument across the field of communication technology and most did that to a greater or lesser extent. Among the most commonly expressed points on the negative side were cyber-bullying, identity theft, bank fraud, paedophiles, viruses, addiction to phones, television and 'Facebook', illegal downloads and piracy, possible brain damage to young children, obesity; the list was commendably long. To balance the argument the benefits of instant communication with friends and family via email, Facebook and Skype, and with emergency services were discussed; also of business use, seeking information, online shopping, booking holidays, programmes to block unwanted material. For able students, this was an ideal question where lots of points could be made in a very concise, tautly executed essay. There was almost universal belief that the benefits of the technology outweigh the risks and dangers and that only the careless are at risk. This viewpoint can be delivered at the end of the essay after weighing up the arguments; less able students often started the essay by stating in line 1 their answer to the question posed about the risks and dangers before analysing the arguments. A better Introduction might have outlined very briefly some of the rapid developments in communication technology over recent years and then their decision on whether we are exaggerating the risks and dangers could have come in a conclusion.

Question 11 Con el uso de ejemplos, da tu opinión sobre las películas de hoy.

In general, this essay was answered weakly and perhaps it was chosen by students who failed to see the immediate attractiveness of the other two essays whose subject matter was far less challenging in terms of content. The word *hoy* in the title appears simple but it is not because it clearly has to mean something like 'of recent times' or 'nowadays'; the time frame probably needs to be specified in some way at the outset. What is certain is that there was far too much emphasis on the size of the screen, the quality of sound, the introduction of 3D and those who were clearly struggling to find relevant content talked about the enjoyment of being with friends at the cinema, about the price of tickets, about the fun of eating popcorn.

Understandably, few students had a breadth of view about films and far greater thought and planning was needed to tackle the question successfully; there were the required references to films but most students were unable to go back beyond examples such as 'Avatar', 'Toy Story', 'Harry Potter', and 'Pirates of the Caribbean'. Films of 2012 such as 'The Avengers', 'Hunger Games' and 'The Twilight Saga' were the most frequently quoted as *magníficas* but very rarely was there any successful analysis as to why that might be the case; most often the reason was that it was enjoyable and that the actors are brilliant.

Some students did have excellent ideas with references to film types such as silent movies, musicals, spy and science-fiction films. The earlier Question 5 referred to all of these and perhaps encouraged students to tackle the question. Some students wrote of foreign films such as Almodóvar's *Volver*, *Mala educación* and *La piel que habito* and Guillermo del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno* all gaining creditable mentions. All of this was excellent thinking but it required skill to develop it into a convincing essay.

Question 12 ¿Tú piensas que el deporte es para ver o para participar?

This essay was perhaps easier to structure and students welcomed the opportunity to write an essay of the 'advantages and disadvantages' type. Marks were gained quickly for obvious points such as sport being fun, healthy and character-building; students developed these ideas with excellent vocabulary about friendships, travel, competition, parts of the body, self-esteem and confidence. Many wrote convincingly of their own sporting prowess and achievements.

In general, there was support for participation in sport and criticism of watching it because it was felt that the latter only leads to laziness, addiction and obesity. Much as these latter points gained some reward, the more able students recognised that it was not an essay that needed to come down on one side or the other. Indeed, the opportunity to watch good and great sportsmen and sportswomen on television and in stadiums around the world was seen as wonderful. It was pleasing to see students mention a wide range of sports and to give examples of their personal heroes such as Kelly Holmes, Steve Redgrave, Wayne Rooney etc. Many made reference to the upcoming Olympics and said that they would be watching on television or in person in London.

Much sensible reference was made to older people and to disabled people being able to enjoy watching sport as they were no longer capable of taking part.

There was obvious passion in the way that this essay was answered by many students and there was a sense of involvement and genuine belief in what was being written.

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 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 suggested content 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

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 student exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students for future examinations

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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