

# A-level

# SPANISH

Unit 4 Speaking  
Report on the Examination

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SPA4T/V  
June 2013

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Version: 1.0

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### Administration

On the whole, the Unit 4 tests were well conducted and clearly recorded. A number of schools are allowing their students to fill in their own STMS forms which resulted in some illegible names and incorrect candidate numbers. Teachers conducting the tests are also reminded that they should print their own name on the STMS so that the Teacher Performance Record can be forwarded to the appropriate person. It is helpful to visiting examiners if the specific focus of the Cultural Topic is stated on the STMS, e.g. if only one film or painting has been studied, this should be made clear.

### Part 1

Most students are now well trained to cope with the task in Part 1 and there were many who scored the full 5 marks for the one-minute outline of their point of view. There were many excellent performances in the discussion part of this section with both examiner and student engaged in a lively and well-informed exchange of views. Part 1 is a challenging task for the examiner as well as for the student and such impressive outcomes are only achieved where there is a clear understanding of the issues and thorough preparation of ideas in advance of the test.

Not all teacher-examiners realise that the discussion should be based on the points made by the student in this first minute. They are strongly advised therefore to jot down briefly these points as a starting point for the discussion. Problems arose when there was confusion over which of the Opinions the student had chosen to defend. This, as well as the card chosen, should be stated clearly at the start of the test. There were instances where the student said s/he was defending one Opinion, but appeared to be making points on the other side. In some cases, the examiner noticed this and asked for confirmation of the Opinion chosen. However, on some occasions, it was obvious to the marker that the examiner was not listening carefully to the student and consequently some very strange exchanges ensued. Since 15 marks are available for Part 1, it is essential that the stance taken by the student is clear from the start.

Although it is not necessary for anyone to win the argument, the task consists of defending **one** of the opinions. A number of students regularly began their response to each challenge with *Sí, es verdad* or *Entiendo su punto de vista...* They are reminded that the Mark Scheme awards the highest marks for defending and justifying opinions, not for being conciliatory.

In the majority of tests the Notes for Examiners were used to good effect. However, some teacher-examiners were heard reciting them verbatim with no attempt to respond to points made by the student. In a few instances the answers given by the students showed evidence of prior knowledge of the stimulus cards and pre-learning of responses.

### Tarjeta A ¿Desarrollo industrial o responsabilidad medioambiental?

This was not a popular card and some students who chose it failed to tackle the central issue of whether emerging economies should be criticised for putting industrial development before environmental considerations. Less able students who opted to defend Opinion 1 tended to regurgitate pre-learnt material about renewable energy, recycling, public transport and so on without relating it to developing economies or questioning the priorities of these countries. One or two mentioned the Kyoto agreement, but without being able to argue persuasively about its significance.

### Tarjeta B ¿Quiénes tienen que adaptarse, los inmigrantes o nosotros?

This was one of the most popular cards and students were able to put forward relevant arguments on each side. Among less able students, there was a tendency to confuse *normas y costumbres* with *leyes*, arguing that immigrants should obey the law. Others argued that immigrants should be allowed to eat and wear what they like. More able students stressed the importance of cultural attitudes which can be the greatest barrier to genuine integration. It was evident in some schools that students had acquired a lot of material about the Multicultural Society but were unable to apply

it selectively to the specific issues of Integration and Immigration. As in any written examination, failure to answer the question set will not attract high marks.

### **Tarjeta C ¿Cómo eliminar el hambre, dando dinero o fomentando la autosuficiencia?**

The overwhelming majority of students who chose this card argued very convincingly in favour of Opinion 2. In order to defend Opinion 1 successfully it was helpful to distinguish between *alleviating* poverty and *eliminating* it as suggested by the title. Many focussed on the urgency of the need to provide aid and some argued that it is unethical to have surpluses in the developed world whilst people are starving in poorer countries.

### **Tarjeta D ¿Debemos conservar las especies en peligro de extinción?**

This was not a popular choice and produced few really good discussions. Opinion 1 was the preferred choice but few were able to talk meaningfully about the balance of the ecosystem and the need for genetic diversity. Many of the points made were based on sentiment and some even argued that if these animals were allowed to become extinct, there would be nothing for humans to eat. A small number of students were well-informed about the current threats to the bee population and the consequences for agriculture.

### **Tarjeta E Los inmigrantes, ¿hay que aceptarles a todos?**

This was a very popular card and there were persuasive arguments on both opinions. There were frequent references to the unsustainability of mass immigration in economically difficult times. These were countered by arguments in favour of a fairer distribution of wealth. Although in general this card was very well done, some students failed to appreciate the real issue at stake which was *controlled* immigration, as opposed to an open-door policy. Although they were able to repeat received ideas their responses were sometimes naïve and ill-informed.

### **Tarjeta F La pena de muerte, ¿la mejor solución?**

This was less popular than might have been expected, but those who chose it expressed very definite views for or against capital punishment. Some able students went beyond the ethical or religious arguments and weighed up the potential cost of imposing the death penalty, with possibly endless appeals and years spent on Death Row, against the cost of keeping someone in prison for life. Others rejected the possibility of executing an innocent person arguing that modern forensic science has made this much less likely.

## **Part 2**

The timing of Part 2 was much better this year with few over-long tests. Examiners noted that the majority of students had a very good knowledge of their Cultural Topics and reported hearing many interesting discussions. It is disappointing, however, that many hard-working students fail to achieve a high mark for Interaction because the examiner does not challenge their views or allows them to deliver long, pre-learned speeches instead of seeking to develop their ideas. As in Part 1, marks are available for “countering views” and it must be stressed once again that it is the responsibility of the examiner to offer the student opportunities to do so by listening carefully and challenging, (some of) the students’ ideas. This is often much easier to do in the case of films and literary works. Where students have studied a region or a period of history there is a temptation to focus on factual material. The mark scheme clearly shows that factual information alone will not attract more than 6/10 for Interaction.

### **Cultural topics**

Popular topics this year were very similar to previous years:

### **Region/community**

*Cataluña, Andalucía, Galicia, País Vasco, Cuba* and other Latin American countries

**Period of history**

*La Guerra Civil, la Transición a la democracia, La revolución cubana*

**Author:**

*Esquivel: Como agua para chocolate*

*García Márquez: Crónica de una muerte anunciada, El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

*Sender: Réquiem por un campesino español*

*Quiroga*

**Dramatist/poet**

*Lorca: La casa de Bernarda Alba, Bodas de Sangre, Yerma*

*Bécquer: Rimas*

*Fernando Fernán Gómez: Las bicicletas son para el verano*

**Director/architect/musician/painter**

*Almodóvar: Volver, Todo sobre mi madre, Hable con ella etc.*

*Guillermo del Toro: El laberinto del fauno, El espinazo del diablo*

*Amenábar: Mar adentro*

*José Luis Cuerda: La lengua de las mariposas*

*Diego Luna: Abel*

*Andrés Wood: Machuca*

*Gaudí, Dalí, Picasso*

**Pronunciation**

Examiners highlighted recurring errors in pronunciation such as placing the stress on the end of words such as: *débil, tragedia, democracia, comedia, cárcel*. Students are advised to practise multisyllable words such as *organizaciones*. It was more common to award 4 Good than 5 Very Good for pronunciation.

**Grammar**

Overall the quality of the language produced in this year's tests was competent and on many occasions excellent. Most students were able to express fairly sophisticated ideas using a variety of structures and a very good range of appropriate vocabulary. That said, it was noticeable that even very able students frequently resorted to the epithet *interesante* when giving an opinion about a work or an artist. This should prompt an invitation to explain or justify the statement, but sadly, in many cases it did not.

Examiners commented once again on the tendency to over-use "fillers" such as *por añadidura, que yo sepa, si tuviera que dar mi opinión, depende de los ojos con que se mire...* Students are advised to concentrate on expressing ideas clearly, using coherent sentences, rather than inserting redundant and unnatural-sounding expressions.

Language deficiencies already noted in the report on Unit 2 were also in evidence to a lesser degree at Unit 4. In addition, words frequently confused were: *morir/matar, ahorrar/salvar, consumir/consumar*. Anglicisms that occurred regularly were: *al final del día, audiencia, los locales, al empiezo*.

Notwithstanding the suggestions for improvement expressed above, it must be stated that this year's students have performed to a very high standard and they and their teachers are to be congratulated on their hard work and commitment.

### **Web Pages**

Schools/colleges are reminded that a wealth of support documents can be found on our web pages <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/spanish/a-level/spanish-2695>. These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, Reports on the Examination, Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations and teaching and learning resources. For SPA4 the resources include advice to teachers conducting your own tests and the materials from the Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students for future examinations. The Secure Key Materials (SKM) 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.

### **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion).