

A-level

Spanish

Unit 1 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

SPAN1
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Question 1

This question was generally well answered by the majority of students, giving them a positive introduction to the paper. However, despite the rubric, some still answered in English and were therefore unable to score any marks.

Question 1a

This question was generally well answered but there were many students who answered using 'navigating/navegating' which was not credited. Also some students incorrectly gave 'watching TV' as their response.

Question 1b

This was well answered, though surprisingly many misunderstood *una docena* and answers such as 'twelfth' and 'two hundred' were common.

Question 1c

Item (c) was also generally well answered apart from a few responses such as 'yesterday'.

Question 1d

Once again, this question was well answered, though surprisingly quite a few students answered '534' instead of '134'. Numbers still appear to be a challenge for some students.

Question 1e

Many students did not recognise/know a key item of vocabulary, *jubilados*, and gave the answer 'young people', 'juveniles' or even 'jubilated people'. Others failed to understand the full meaning and merely said the 'old', rather than those who were 'retired'.

Question 1f

Some students misinterpreted the question and only wrote 'computers', which was not accepted. The full response should have included either 'portable' or 'laptop'.

Question 1g

Surprisingly, this question was not well answered. *Telediarios* was often confused for 'daily shows'. 'Soaps' was more widely recognised, although other common answers to this question were 'series', 'sitcoms' and 'dramas'.

Question 1h

The first part of the answer was well understood, though some students translated *emitir* with 'to emit' or 'to play'. Students should be careful when writing their answers to ensure that they communicate clearly in English.

Question 2

This question was well answered by the majority of students. The main issue was many students choice 'V' for 2(b) after hearing *el 30%* in the text. The text said that *un 30 por ciento fuma diariamente* and not that 30% of people had decided to quit smoking.

Question 3

Overall, students scored well on this question. The main issues occurred in option O where the subtle difference in tenses was not always recognised. This is the first examination where the letters I, J and L were not used in the list of available answers for multiple choice questions. This practice will continue for all future examination series.

Question 4

Here again, some students did not read the rubric and answered the questions in English not Spanish and, as such, were unable to score any marks. Generally, this question was well answered, with students learning to extract their answers from the exercise and not add in extra information that could invalidate their response. Again, a lack of precision prevented some students from accessing marks in this questions, for example in 4(a) writing *trabajo* rather than *a buscar trabajo* or again in 4(d) *la red* rather than *las redes sociales*. Frequent listening practice would help students to distinguish between the words in a sense group and avoid strange combinations like *nobabien en sus estudios* or *no va viene en sus estudios*. Some students wrote their answer in the first person, making the response nonsensical, eg 4(i) *sueño con tener a toda la familia junta*. If students are to use a verb in their answers which they cannot directly use from the text, they should try and make it refer to the person in the question. Careful reading of the question should help in focusing on the material necessary to answer it.

Question 5

This was another question that was well answered by most students. The main challenge was question 5(b).

Question 6

This type of question has appeared previously in this unit and students were familiar with the requirement of the task. Students were asked to find the correct statement from a series of three to correctly answer the question. It was heartening to see that the majority of students performed well, with many scoring full or near full marks.

Question 7

Students performed well and appeared to have little difficulty in answering this question.

Question 8

The majority of students did well in this question. Students are reminded that this type of exercise is testing both their grammatical knowledge as well as how well they understand the article and the options. Again, the options I, J and L did not appear in the grid.

Question 9

This is an established question type and students should be aware of the need to write down exactly the form of the word in brackets correctly, including accents. This grammar question was a good opportunity for the most able students to show how firm their grasp of structures is, ranging from stem-changing verbs and irregular plural adjectives to more advanced grammar such as the subjunctive. Many students are still unsure of basic grammatical concepts and verb formation.

The most common mistakes were as follows:

- (a) An inability to conjugate or recognise a radical changing verb. The most common mistakes were *mostro* or *mustro* for *muestro*.
- (b) Many students did not know how to change some nouns from singular to plural. The main mistake here was not changing the letter 'z' to a 'c' when writing *eficaces*. Other less common answers were *eficiendo* and *eficantes*.
- (c) Many students did not realise that there was no need to conjugate the verb here and a common mistake was *siendo*. Others decided to change *ser* into the first person *soy*.
- (d) This was well answered by the majority of students.
- (e) This question proved to be quite challenging. Few students recognised the verb to be irregular in the preterite and conjugated it as *introdució*. Unfortunately, some students introduced an accent (*introdujó*), and as such were unable to score.
- (f) Some students did not put the accent on the verb *vendrá* and so did not score. Many students decided to use the immediate future *va a venir* or present tense *viene*, whilst others decided to change the verb completely and wrote *volvía* or believed the verb to be regular, writing *venirá*.
- (g) Another well-answered question, though some students saw *los deportes* and therefore wrote the verb in the plural form.
- (h) This was quite well answered. However, some students wrote *hacía* as their answer.
- (i) It was disappointing that many students did not recognise a very clear case for the subjunctive.
- (j) Some students decided to change *aquel* to *ese*, *la*, *aquí* and even *mí*. Other common answers were *aquello* and *aqué*.

Essay questions

It was pleasing to see a number of very high quality essays this year. However, there were some students who tried to incorporate pre-learnt complex language which did not compensate for rather weak content points. A number of students spent too much time writing introductions which added little to the quality of the essay, and some conclusions simply repeated previous content.

Of the three titles offered in this series, the question about the Internet (Question 10) was by far the most popular, with a relatively even spread of answers attempted for the other two. The answers given were at times a little predictable in terms of content and the differentiating factor was their level of justification to the points they made or their range of exemplification. In the best examples, the essays for all titles were thorough, well-organised and informative and expressed in a very high quality of carefully-crafted Spanish; at the opposite end of the spectrum there was a paucity of ideas offered and little or no development, along with a poor level of expression in Spanish.

Some students fail to plan their answers carefully and this often leads to poorly-organised and repetitive responses. They may also write answers that are excessively long and, while trying to write too much, they are also prone to make grammatical errors and to lose marks under variety of lexis and structure.

Question 10

This question was the most popular essay choice. However, far too many students did not focus well enough on the question. Many presented the pros and cons of the Internet, rather than concentrating on to what extent and how it has changed our lives. Though students were credited for any points they made in such essays, many were unable to access the top mark band because their answers did not fully address the question. Teachers should encourage students to ensure that they read the question carefully and tailor their response accordingly, rather than produce a series of possibly pre-learnt paragraphs.

Generally, students focused on the Internet changing our lives in the following way: communication, shopping, education, fraud, lack of privacy, cyberbullying, changes in the work place, and impact on health.

Question 11

This question was the least popular and the one that students found to be the most challenging. Nevertheless, some students produced well thought-out essays on this topic, including a good range of reasons to explain the popularity of plastic surgery, the cult of celebrity, the influence of the media, issues around self-esteem, judging people on their looks and peer group pressure. Relatively few mentioned the more positive use of plastic surgery to help people rebuild their lives after an accident or a medical intervention.

Question 12

This was the second most popular essay and many students structured their responses well. Many students focused well on the title and went into some depth on the pros and cons of marriage versus living together. Most gave a well-balanced response, presenting both sides of the argument, before giving a personal opinion. There was also a tendency, however, to stray into the field of gay marriage, for example, thus drifting away from the title.

It is worth reminding teachers and students of the following:

- letters, especially a, o, m, n, and t, need to be clearly written
- students should delete any errors and write the word or phrase again rather than attempt to write over an error; such attempted corrections are not always clearly legible and could result in marks being lost
- size of writing: examiners must be able to read the script easily
- there is no need for students to count the number of words they have written; everything will be marked.

Students should address the title of the essay clearly and support their arguments in a fluent and coherent manner.

Common errors included:

- accentuation
- use of anglicised structures
- direct and indirect object pronouns

- disjunctive pronouns
- adjectival agreement
- choosing the wrong part of the verb for the subject of that verb
- consistency of possessive adjectives (eg '*mi padre sólo usa internet en **tu** propio ordenador*')
- 'if' clauses
- use of the personal *a*
- use of *por* and *para*
- reflexive pronouns
- use of *ser* and *estar*
- tense formation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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