

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Spanish (6SP03) Paper 1A and 1B

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Format of the test

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections and lasts between 11 and 13 minutes.

The first section is a debate and requires candidates to present and to take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. The examiner then plays devil's advocate, adopts the opposite view to the candidate and provides strong and meaningful challenges to allow candidates to defend their views and to use the language of debate and argument.

At the end of this section, the examiner indicates that the examination is moving to the second part of the test and moves away smoothly from the debate in part one to the discussion in part two by asking a link question that leads from the initial issue into an area associated with the initial issue. In this part of the examination candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to engage in a natural and unpredictable but not unfamiliar meaningful discussion of two or three follow up issues. During this section the examiner should encourage the candidate to express their views on the issues as raised.

Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 50.

Response - 20 marks

There are three descriptors in this box.

- Spontaneity. Is the discourse spontaneous or pre-learnt?
- Abstract concepts. Can the candidate handle abstract concepts not purely concrete exchanges? Is the discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive?
- Range of lexis and structures. Does the candidate have a good range of lexis and sentence structures appropriate to the issues discussed?

Quality of Language - 7 marks

This box assesses accuracy of language, pronunciation and intonation.

Reading and research - 7 marks

This box assesses the candidate's level of awareness and understanding of both general issues and the chosen issue for debate

There is no requirement for students to demonstrate knowledge related to Spanish –language culture, nor do they need to have a long list of facts and figures. However candidates do need to undertake research into their chosen issue and read widely around other topics in order to be able to demonstrate awareness and to be able to formulate their opinion and justify their arguments.

Comprehension and development - 16 marks

There are two descriptors in this box:

- The ability to understand the spoken language. Can candidates understand all the implications of the questions put to them?

- The ability to develop the responses. Can candidates respond demonstrating understanding, take the initiative and move the discussion forward?

Candidate's performance

The majority of centres had a good understanding of what was required of this unit and most of their candidates were well prepared. There was a wide range in quality in of performances heard. However there were many fine and very competent performances noted. It is very important for centres to remember that successful outcome for candidates in this test is closely related to and often dependent upon the way the teacher examiner conducts the examination. The following observation from tests submitted this summer illustrates this point.

Some examiners allowed their candidates to recite long monologues learnt by heart without interruption and at times it appeared to have colluded with candidates. Such practice merely indicates a lack of spontaneity and an over reliance on pre-learning. In such instances candidates' mark for 'Response' will have been affected.

The most successful candidates approached the test with confidence and responded readily and fluently to all questions asked. They were able to develop their replies without too much reliance on or prompting from the examiner.

The debate

The best candidates had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support their arguments. They also had good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. Weaker performing candidates simply relied on assertion, generalisations or personal conviction to pull through and consequently all too often ran out of ideas and tended to repeat their arguments.

The discussion

In this part of the examination the better performing candidates were well informed and aware of current issues, could express their opinions clearly, analyse and justify their points of view with examples or evidence and develop their responses. Some excellent examining was heard from many centres where examiners asked probing questions in no more than two or three follow up areas which allowed their candidates to produce the necessary detail and depth in their responses. All areas introduced for development were well linked and followed a natural course in ensuing discussion.

The following are two examples of well-chosen follow-up issues for the oral tests:

Chosen issue: A favor de que las parejas homosexuales puedan adoptar.
Follow up areas: Cambios en nuestra sociedad.
Igualdad y discriminación

Chosen issue: A favor de la energía eólica.
Follow up areas: El accidente nuclear en el Japón.
El cambio climático
La globalización

Occasionally some examiners forgot that discussion entails interaction between two people and instead they just went through the motions of introducing many topics, asking one question, waiting for an answer and then asking another question which was not always related to the area under discussion. These examinations were more interviews than discussions and were not what is expected or required.

The following are two examples of a badly conducted test submitted to examiners this summer:

Chosen issue: A favor de fumar en lugares públicos
Follow up areas: La crisis económica
Osama Bin Laden
El paro
Las tasas universitarias
El desempleo
La tecnología

Chosen Issue A favor de la eutanasia,
Follow up topics El aborto,
La pena de muerte,
La intervención militar en países árabes
El terrorismo
La inmigración,
La violencia de género.

The follow up areas for this part of the examination can be chosen from the Additional General Topic Areas for A2 as well as from the General Topic Area for AS. However for a candidate to access the higher marks, AS topics visited at A2 should be considered in greater depth and answers given to questions should clearly indicate progression from AS to A2. Occasionally teachers examiners conducted the first part of the exam (the debate) correctly but for the second part (the discussion) they asked AS type questions doing a re-run of the Unit 1 not giving the candidates any chance to develop their response appropriately.

The following are two examples of where candidates give a good A2 level response to questions that are commonly asked in the AS oral exam.

1-¿Qué importancia tiene la tecnología hoy en día?
La tecnología ha cambiado el mundo del trabajo, el transporte y la ciencia en general. Por ejemplo las máquinas hacen nuestro trabajo más fácil, también nos ayudan a conocer mejor el funcionamiento del cuerpo humano y a curar enfermedades. Los aviones pueden llevar medicinas, ropa y otra

ayuda a zonas que han sufrido un desastre. Pero la tecnología también tiene desventajas puede matar, un ejemplo es Libia donde están matando a la gente, destruyendo hospitales y colegios.

In this first example the examiner continued the discussion asking questions which explored the topics touched on in the candidate's response such as *Has mencionado Libia, ¿tú crees que tenemos el derecho de intervenir en la política de este país?*

2-¿Quién es responsable de la obesidad juvenil?

La responsabilidad debería estar compartida entre los padres, la sociedad, los colegios y el gobierno. Los padres a veces están muy cansados y no quieren cocinar o no saben cómo... alimentar bien a sus hijos. El gobierno ha dejado que venden comida basura en los colegios. Hay mucha publicidad de la comida rápida en la televisión y ahora es difícil cambiar los hábitos alimenticios de los jóvenes.

In this second example the examiner continued the discussion asking questions which explored the topics touched on in the candidate's response such as *Los jóvenes mayores de 16 años deberían ser totalmente responsables de lo que hacen y de lo que comen, ¿no?*

The following example illustrates how candidate's given answer does not show any progression from AS:

1-¿Por qué hay obesidad juvenil?

Porque a los jóvenes les gusta mucho la comida rápida. Ellos comen mucha comida basura que tiene mucha sal y grasa.

Further and limited questions asked in this example:

¿Tú comes mucha comida rápida?

'Para evitar la obesidad, ¿es importante hacer deporte?

did not provide the candidate with an opportunity to demonstrate performance at the appropriate level for success.

Native or near-native speakers

It was noted by our examiners that there were many native or near native speakers taking this examination. However, not all of them scored high marks. This was often because they had done little or no preparation at all for the examination relying solely on the quality of their spoken language to pull them thorough. Many candidates were from South America and although there are indeed some differences, for example in vocabulary, depending on the country from which they originate, examiners were aware of these and gave due consideration to all Hispanic alternatives as entirely appropriate.

Suitability of Topics/ Issues

The range of issues chosen for the debate was fairly wide. The most successful ones tended to be those that had a moral and ethical dimension and which had several possibilities for development.

The most popular issues were abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration homosexual marriages and the legalisation of drugs.

Other interesting issues presented this year were : 'En contra de la subida de la matrícula universitaria' , 'En contra de la monarquía inglesa' , 'A favor del derecho de los estudiantes a protestar', 'A favor de la donación obligatoria de órganos' , 'En contra de que los presos puedan votar en las elecciones', 'En contra de la educación en casa' , 'A favor de la intervención de la OTAN en Libia', 'Yo creo que la moda mata' 'En contra de la Copa Mundial en Qatar'.

Unsuitable issues were those that were not arguable from both sides or the ones where the candidate was simply expressing personal opinion, such as 'A favor de que el gobierno apoye el reciclaje', "En contra de la violencia doméstica", 'A favor de mejorar la vida de los niños de las calles en Colombia',

'Pienso que la religión debería ser abolida', 'El abuso del alcohol tiene efectos negativos en los jóvenes'.

There were a few examples of unclear stances such as 'Armas blancas', "Dormir es necesario", 'La ineficiencia del sistema escolar en el mundo'.

Popular current follow-up topics for the discussion were: University fees, The Olympic Games in 2012, The economic crisis, The European Union, Lybia, Osama Bin Laden, The earthquake in Murcia, The nuclear accident in Japan.

Quality of language

-Common errors:

Confusion of ser, estar and haber/ saber, conocer/por, para.

Wrong verb endings, infinitives and gerunds.

No verb at all 'no necesario' 'no posible'

Gender of nouns, agreement of adjectives,

Erratic subject/verb agreement

-Good candidates stood out with:

Complex sentences with relative pronouns

Use of phrases such as 'ya que', 'entonces', 'por eso', 'por consecuencia', 'no solo eso sino también', 'sobre todo', 'lo que quiero decir es que' 'y además'.

Correct comparatives.

Correct use of pronouns.

Correct and appropriate use of the subjunctive.

Correct verb endings, varied tenses,

Correct use of the reflexive.

Correct prepositions following verbs.

Natural use of conversational joiners like "Lo que pasa es que....."

"comprendo lo que dice pero...." "bueno en algunos casos pero en otros es...."

In some cases the pronunciation of some words, especially those close to the English, gave rise to some difficulty. For example: difícil..fácil..idea..usan..policía..problema..variedad..sociedad..Europa..eutanasia.

Some confusion with

-muy/mucho, mayor/mejor and menor

-words such as igualdad, mayoría, controversial, suportivo, serio, las medias, los resultados, los afectos, el mundo tercero, la destinación, las Olímpicas.

-expressions such as es depende, es vale, es necesita, es importancia, es ridículo, es puede, no es importancia, es debe que.

-English verbs given a Spanish ending: restringir, afrontar, acceder, permitir, soportar, promover, resolver.

Teacher Examiner's performance

Conduct of the examination

Most teacher examiners conducted excellent tests. They had carefully read the oral training guide, the Examiner's report as well as the Teacher/Examiner Handbook and followed all the guidelines. To reward the candidate's ability to understand spoken Spanish these examiners asked clear, uncluttered and yet challenging questions using a variety of structures and lexis. They moved away smoothly from the debate in part one to the discussion in part two by asking a link question that led from the initial issue into an area associated with the initial issue. However in a few cases teacher examiners spoke too much and asked long and some quite convoluted questions - this was to the disadvantage of their candidates.

Timing

The specification is clear about the timing required for the Unit 3 exam. In Part 1 - the debate - the candidate should introduce his or her stance for up to 1 minute (it is not essential that the candidate uses the whole minute for this) after which the examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the examiner moves on to the discussion section (Part 2). The whole oral should last between 11 -13 minutes.

In the majority of cases the correct timing was observed.

Centres are reminded here that it would be impossible and most unnatural for any discussion to adhere precisely to the quoted timings as there needs to be a smooth transition from one topic to another. Nevertheless the timings of the examination should remain as close as possible to those indicated in the specification. In the few cases where the tests were short the agreed penalty was applied to the test and resulted in a loss of marks. Where tests were too long examiner stopped listening at the end of the next sentence once 13 minutes had passed.

Centre Performance

Recording

The tests sent from centres were recorded appropriately on cassettes, CDs and USBs. All forms are acceptable. On the whole they were well labeled, well packaged and arrived undamaged accompanied by the OR3 oral form correctly filled and the attendance register.

The quality of recording was, for most candidates, very clear although occasionally the examiners placed the microphone closer to the teacher examiner rather than to the candidate and as a consequence recording were difficult to hear.

Documentation

A few centres failed to send the attendance registers.

Occasionally the OR forms included 'the stance on the issue' written in English rather than in Spanish as required.

Teacher Examiners:

Advice and Guidance

- Candidates must choose an issue that easily lends itself to debate and they must make sure it is phrased correctly 'Estoy a favor de..' 'Estoy en contra de..'
- Candidates need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments.
- Examiners should challenge the candidate's views so that they are given suitable opportunities to demonstrate their ability to argue their case and justify their opinion.
- Candidates should not be given advance knowledge of the issues to be raised during the examination or learn their answers by heart as this lack of spontaneity will be reflected in the application of the mark scheme. In particular a minimum marks allocation for Response.
- Examiners need to ask sufficiently complex and challenging questions to allow their candidates to access the full range of marks available for Comprehension and Development. Please note questions can be linguistically challenging or conceptually challenging. Complexity can be achieved through the response individual questions require.
- Examiners must make sure that the second part of the exam is not a re-run of the Unit 1 oral test. For candidates to access the higher marks they must show progression from AS to A2
- Examiners should not introduce too many follow up issues to allow the candidate to produce depth of discussion and development of opinions.
- Examiners should not correct, clarify or finish candidates' responses.
- Centres should not rotate the same two or three issues for all their candidates but rather personalise each examination for each individual candidate.

Conclusion

The outcome of the examination of this unit this summer was pleasing. The majority of centres had prepared their candidates thoroughly so they had a good understanding of the requirements of this unit. This allowed candidates to respond well to its demands.

Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

5-8	Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.
9-12	Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts.
13-16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.

If a candidate would have scored 12, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. The adjustment should not be applied to 'Quality of language' or 'Reading and research'.

Test that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not move away from initial input

e.g. spontaneous discussion is not initiated/further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered.

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

Response	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only one unpredictable area discussed
No more than 8 marks	No more than 12 marks

Reading and research	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only one unpredictable area discussed
No more than 3 marks	No more than 4 marks

Comprehension and development	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only one unpredictable area discussed
No more than 7 marks	No more than 10 marks

Tests that are pre-learnt

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see 'Response' grid.

- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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