

GCSE SPANISH

Unit 2 Reading
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Overall students found this examination more accessible than in 2012. On the whole, they had been well prepared and were familiar with the question styles. As usual there were one or two items of vocabulary which caused difficulties. The majority of students were able to show some understanding of short, simple written texts in familiar contexts. While most could successfully recognise opinions, only the most able could identify main points and extract details. Being able to identify main points is a requirement even for grade F and so it is expected that most students should be trained in this skill.

Teachers are reminded that the reading comprehension needs to cover the whole specification and that revision is best not left until after the controlled assessments are completed. A continuous approach to both teaching and revising is the best approach for success in this component.

Foundation Tier

Question 1

This was very well done.

Question 2

Students were very familiar with the vocabulary in this question and many were able to distinguish between what 16-year-olds spend their money on, as opposed to 12-year-olds, showing some ability to identify some details.

Question 3

Some students naturally went for the obvious distracters, recognising basic vocabulary such as *banco* and *economía* and confusing *quince años* with *quince euros*. Some of the more able students were quite skilled in identifying the three correct answers from a longer text which included a range of tenses.

Question 4

Students were again steered towards the distracters in Question 4 (a) but more importantly, many were unable to identify the most difficult aspect of university life for Beatriz, despite the emboldening of the word **most** in the question. Those who worked out that the correct answer came after *pero lo más difícil para mí es...* made a mixed job of translating the expression *mantenerse en forma*. All answers referring to 'form' were rejected unless they were linked to being fit.

Question 5

This question was very well done. Students seemed to be able to relate to and understand this question well.

Question 6

Students are very familiar with the question style and were very good at identifying the feelings about horror films. However, part (b) was not very well done. Although the text included the word *aburren* which tends to be very well known, the majority of students thought that Raúl's overall feelings were positive. Maybe they were swayed by *fascinan* and *impresionantes*.

Question 7

All parts of Question 7 discriminated well but part (b) was particularly difficult for the majority of students. Here many students thought that the advantage of the flight attendant's job was the

uniform. *Vuelos gratuitos* was not well known at all. Most students followed the example and wrote two words as an answer which was pleasing to see. In part (c) it was felt that ‘flexible job’ was not quite the correct answer and markers were instructed to look for ‘flexible **hours**’. In part (d) the word *libres* was confused with *libros* and many musicians were ‘reading in the mornings’ instead of ‘having the mornings free’. Such confusion seems to be a perennial error which should be avoided by careful and accurate learning of vocabulary.

Question 8

Success in Question 8 (a) may be due to the amount of target language used in the classroom. Students knew this vocabulary very well. The more transactional vocabulary, tested in part (b), was less well known and yet the questions asking for prices were well known. It would seem that some students think that *gracioso* is a negative adjective since many gave a P+N answer to this question which was not correct.

Question 9

Places in a town were very well known.

Question 10

The healthy living vocabulary tested was very well known. Again, the majority of students tried to follow the verb + noun example which shows that students are doing well in following the advice of their teachers with regard to examination technique. Answers which did not include a verb were marked wrong.

Question 11

Single items of vocabulary in the context of the environment were well known.

Higher Tier

General Comments

Students were familiar with the question styles and the general requirements of the examination. Almost all students were able to access some part of the paper and there were few gaps except in the case of Question 9. The majority wrote clearly and used the examples better than ever before to guide the style of their response. Overall students’ performance was better this year than in 2012. The skills required to access grades C and above had been well taught and students were acting on advice from previous reports in that they were generally following the example answers, including the right amount of detail, understanding a wide range of structures. They were able to identify main points, extract details and recognise opinions on the whole. The paper differentiated well between those who were also able to recognise points of view, attitudes and emotions and draw simple conclusions. Where the most able students shone was in their ability to give full details in those questions where as many as three separate details were required for one mark. The most able students were also able to understand the small but important words and apply them to sensible answers. It was pleasing to note that students were trying to give sensible guesses in cases of uncertainty. At Higher Tier, students should expect to come up against a more testing range of vocabulary, particularly in questions aimed at grade A and A*.

Question 1

Whereas at Foundation, students found part (b) challenging, most of the Higher Tier students found this a straightforward introduction to the examination and scored well. Students and teachers should note that over a question of this type, all three alternatives will be tested (ie P, N and P+N) and that only one of the alternatives will be repeated. Thankfully blanket answers such as P throughout are very rare nowadays.

Question 2

A large majority of students showed that they were capable of picking out the people who thought that mobiles were **not** essential nowadays. Small, yet complex structures such as *ya no*, *tanto...* negatives and the conditional tense were well recognised.

Question 3

In 3(a) if students wrote about going to Florida or visiting theme parks without mentioning the fact that María was going to be able to take her boyfriend along as well, then they were not credited with the mark. Many less able students wrote about going to Florida as the most exciting part of her holiday plans. These questions are designed to test students' ability to pick out details and discount the distracters and the more able Higher Tier student can do this very successfully. The same skill was being tested in part (b) (picking out the **main** reason for María missing her flight). Many recognised the fact that her father thought that he had lost his passport and that the taxi had arrived late but the word *atasco* was not well known. Even those who knew it was a traffic jam thought that there was a traffic jam in the airport.

Question 4

Question 4 tested students' ability to draw simple conclusions from a text and understand some unfamiliar language, which they showed that they could do very well. This is a difficult higher level skill in a foreign language and students did very well to get this question right.

Question 5

Students continued to perform well in all parts of this question which included some past tense verbs and time phrases.

Question 6

To succeed in the question type in this question students need to refer back to the question as well as the answer in the survey and include a high level of detail and precision in their answer. Although students are getting more skilled in answering this type of question, it continues to differentiate well. Of the structures tested here, *hace falta* was the least well known and many students thought that the swimming pool was faulty. In part (c) most understood the frequency phrase *a veces* but then thought that Ana sometimes vandalised. *Preocuparse* was not widely known. Of the three parts, part (a) was the one where most students knew all of the words and translated them correctly. This question type has featured on several examination papers now and students and teachers are advised to practise the skills required to be successful.

Question 7

Question 7 tested students' ability to draw simple conclusions again although the texts were broken up to make the overall question more accessible. Many students thought that Vera felt argumentative in part (b). Perhaps they understood the verb *discutir* and did not understand the final three words *¡Qué equivocada estaba!* which made her feel foolish. It is not enough for students taking Higher Tier reading just to understand the vocabulary in the texts. They have to apply what they understand and draw conclusions, recognise emotions and points of view and the more able students can do this.

Question 8

Many students thought that option C was true. Perhaps this was because they were reading quickly and as soon as they saw the number *quince* they assumed it was referring to the amount of average pocket money, when in fact it was talking about 15-year-olds.

Question 9

This was a particularly challenging question, requiring full details as shown in the example answer. Markers were instructed to look for three elements in each part of the answers and only a very small number of students scored full marks on this question. There were a number of challenges. In part 1, *Mayores* was translated as ‘the mayor’, ‘the majority’ and ‘the homeless’. In part 2, a large number of students did not qualify the type of concert and many were over general in their answers offering vague answers such as ‘charity events and fund raisers’ as alternatives. Although these were plausible in the context and candidates are applauded for the fact that they at least had a go, it was felt that the three cognates: *organizar*, *conciertos* and *benéficos* should not be too much of a barrier to understanding for Higher Tier students. The main barrier in part 2 was understanding the word *inundaciones* but even though markers allowed ‘inundations’ as an alternative, many students gave up before they got to that point and there were indeed many unfinished answers throughout the whole of this particular question. In part 3 *Tercer Mundo* was a major obstacle to understanding. Some thought it was a country itself, others thought they were third rate countries. Some made up answers around the word ‘material’ and wrote about collecting school uniforms. Very few students were successful in this question. Although there is not much text to read, students in this question type have to understand and translate almost all of the sentence and many find this very challenging. As a question it differentiated well with only the most able students showing the required understanding and ability to convey the elicited details precisely in English.

Question 10

Students are used to seeing this question type. As a general rule the words in the texts are not used in the option boxes. However, the word *violentos* was in text (c) and the English ‘violent’ in option box A. This must explain why option A was by far the most popular answer to part (c). Matching words in the text with words in the option boxes will almost always lead to the wrong answer.

Question 11

This was quite well done. Students have had this question type before where there are two elements in each of the option boxes, increasing the level of difficulty from, for example, the question type in Question 7. Students have to work hard for their marks here and work systematically through each of the options. They are getting good at this and the familiar context of prospective school council representatives perhaps helped.

Question 12

This was another familiar question type which tests students’ ability to identify opinions and attitudes. Unlike Question 10 where the word *violent* appears once in the texts, here key words such as *legal/ilegal*, *paro/desempleo* will appear in several sentences. Students have to decide from a variety of opinions which is the right one for the answer. They can do this well.

Question 13

This appeared on the Foundation paper and tested students’ ability to extract details (part a) and identify main points (part b). Although, as expected, Higher Tier students performed very well in part (a), some still struggled to identify the **main** difficult aspect of Maria’s university life. Those who successfully recognised the Spanish *mantenerse en forma* then could not translate it clearly into English and answers which were common at Foundation Tier such as ‘maintain form’ or ‘keeping in form’, were also common at Higher.

Question 14

This was another overlap question and although Higher Tier students performed better than Foundation students, parts (b) and (d) still caused problems for Higher Tier students. The vocabulary items *vuelos gratuitos* were largely unknown and the word *libres* continued to be understood as a book and so the answers which had been common at Foundation Tier such as 'he had the mornings off to read' continued to feature here.

Advice to teachers

Answers in English are where students make the most mistakes and teachers could improve the overall performance of their students by focussing their examination revision on these question types. Identifying details is also a skill which some students find challenging. Regular reading comprehension will help students to improve their skills and widen vocabulary. Students should be encouraged to answer questions given in English with some precision as defined in the published mark scheme for questions 4(b), 7 and 10. It is very pleasing to note that students are answering by following the example. These days, they rarely answer with lists of possible answers and rarely leave gaps. Examination technique has improved in this examination which probably contributes to the overall improved performance.

- Encourage students to highlight the key question words in English.
- Train students to spot the distracters in a text.
- Advise students to read the whole sequence of language before answering the question so that they can see if there is a distracter.
- Make a bank of small but important words, especially negatives and intensifiers and test them regularly.
- Practise texts which elicit opinions, (P/N/P+N), especially expressions which may lead to a negative meaning eg, *demasiado* and *poco* + an adjective. There are many examples of this question style in past and legacy examination papers.
- If a question asks for the **most** important thing, there are likely to be a few options to choose from in the text. Train students to look for several options and then pick out the right answer.

Advice to students

- Ensure your writing is clear and legible. Do not use stylised or unusual letter formation in the examination as examiners may not be able to read your answers.
- Always answer in English if the question requires you do so.
- Read the questions first as they will give you an idea of what the text is about.
- Read the question carefully. Underline the key question word.
- Practise spotting the distracters in a text. Perhaps write your own short texts with them in so that you can get used to them.
- Keep a list of small but important words and phrases such as *más que nada*, *nunca*, *siempre* and learn them regularly.

- **Always** follow the example – if the example is a one word answer, **ONLY** write one word.
- If an answer asks for **two** points, only include two points. You will not gain any extra marks by writing more because the examiner will only mark the first two.
- If a word is written in bold in the question it means that you must focus on that word and take account of it when giving your answer.
- If a question has **exact** or **exactly** in it this means that you must give full details or give a longer answer to be awarded the mark.
- The questions normally relate to the order that the information is given in a text, especially if the questions relate to a longer text and you are required to answer in English. This means that the first questions will most probably relate to the first part of the text.
- **Never** leave a gap. Have a guess – you may be right!

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