



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Spanish 4695 *Specification*

46954 Writing (Controlled Assessment)

Report on the Examination *2010 examination - June series*

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General Comments

In this, the first year of the new specification, there was a great variety in the standard of work submitted, ranging from short responses with simple sentences and occasional opinions through to detailed and generally accurate responses using a variety of vocabulary, structures and verb tenses. It was also apparent that some younger candidates often lacked the linguistic maturity to be able to produce work which reached the upper mark bands of the assessment criteria.

Titles chosen for tasks varied from:

- those suggested in the specification. *A day in the life of a celebrity* allowed some to write imaginatively about a celebrity and to use impressive Spanish, whereas a good many wrote fairly basic responses containing details about daily life, family, hobbies etc. that could have applied to anyone – often themselves. In the case of the latter, a title of *My Life* would have been more appropriate and would have allowed a more relevant response. This title has now been changed in the specification to be *My life as a celebrity*. With the title *Holidays – the chance to win two weeks in the sun*, many failed to address the idea of this being a competition that they should justify winning and wrote entirely about their own holiday experiences. Again, a more general title of *My Holidays* would have served the candidates better in such cases. This title has now been changed in the specification to be simply *Holidays*.
- those available on the AQA website, ‘Additional Exemplar Tasks’ in the Teacher Resource Bank. *Save my town!* was a title that allowed more able candidates to shine, though others would have benefited from a more general title like *The area where I live* to ensure that their response was attainable and fully relevant.
- adaptations of coursework titles from the legacy specification. *Am I fit and healthy?* remained a popular option. At best, candidates wrote ably upon advantages and disadvantages of different diets and exercise regimes with sound justification; previous bad habits were often mentioned, as were plans for maintaining a healthy lifestyle in the future. Less able candidates often did little more than list what they eat for various meals.
- those designed by centres – often following advice from the AQA Controlled Assessment Advisers. Some teachers successfully devised tasks which were particularly relevant to their candidates: *Our school exchange to Madrid*, for example, which often brought more personalised responses than other titles which sometimes led to very similar responses from almost all candidates within a centre.

Advice to teachers

Choosing your task

- Choose a task title which is broad enough to ensure that candidates’ responses are fully relevant to that task. A key aspect of the Content assessment criteria is the relevance of the response to the task (i.e. the title); as such, the title *My education*, for example, allows for much greater relevant scope than a more restricting title like *A day in my life at school*.
- Choose a task which suits the ability of your candidates. Tasks which involve candidates writing about environmental issues, for example, often suit able candidates but cause difficulties for less able candidates. On the other hand, a title like *Me and my family* does not always give the most able candidates scope to demonstrate the quality of their written Spanish.

- When devising tasks, refer to the assessment criteria so that the bullet points you include to help candidates to structure their response set out to elicit these requirements. For example, candidates should be provided with opportunities to give opinions and to develop them: a bullet point like, *Say if you like your school* will not be as helpful as one which prompts, *Say what you think of your school and why*.
- Unlike the Speaking Test, the bullet points only have the status of guidance. Candidates will not be penalised if they miss out bullet points as long as their response is relevant to the title.
- Devise bullet points, each of which will allow candidates to produce different vocabulary and structures. *Say what you ate yesterday / Say what you usually eat / Say what you will eat tomorrow* may well elicit different tenses but is bound to lead to repetition.
- Ensure that bullet points are written in English and not in Spanish.
- Provide a logical sequence of events in the bullet points and encourage candidates to follow that sequence; this should bring a well organised structure to the response.
- Ensure that candidates are aware that bullet points are prompts for comments they can make and develop; they are not questions to be answered. What they write must make sense without reference to the bullet points. One very able candidate began a paragraph with, *No he estado de vacaciones con mis amigos así que no estoy seguro*. Clearly this makes little sense – unless one is aware of the bullet point, *Do you prefer to go on holiday with family or friends?*

If in any doubt about the suitability of a task, please take advantage of the excellent service offered by the Controlled Assessment Advisers. Your centre will have been provided with the e-mail address of a specific adviser; this can be sought at mfl@aqg.org.uk if you are not aware of your contact.

Preparing your candidates

- **Drafts** – Candidates are not *required* to write a draft at Stage 2. If a draft is produced, it must be done under direct teacher supervision, must **not** be commented upon and must be kept in school.
- **Dictionaries** – Since candidates are entitled to a bi-lingual dictionary when writing up their controlled assessment, experience shows that many would benefit from the teaching of dictionary skills. Care with the spelling of the English word they are seeking to translate would avoid errors like *hogar* being used to describe a favourite film (presumably *grate/great*); understanding that word for word translation will not necessarily succeed – *yo testamento ir* (I will go); and in one extreme case, the word *prep* appearing in mid-Spanish sentence since the candidate was seeking a preposition.
- **Task Planning Forms** – Candidates are entitled to write up to 40 words and to refer to their planning form while writing up their task. These were clearly of benefit to those candidates who used them this year. Most helpful practice seemed to involve: writing a number of key words next to a series of bullet points which reflected the bullet points in the task (advise students to write Spanish words and to check their spelling carefully, and remind them that they could include an English translation alongside a word as long as this is included in the total count). Unacceptable practice had candidates writing too many words or including conjugated verbs in their plan which were not then deleted. Please be sure to check your candidates' Task Planning

Forms, offer them such advice as is allowed and, if they exceed the word limit or include conjugated verbs, the best solution would be to ask candidates to write out a new Form since supposed deletions often remain visible. Please be aware that any sentence in the Controlled Assessment which uses a conjugated verb that appears on the Task Planning Form will be ignored by the examiner in the assessment process.

- **Criteria for Assessment** – It would be an advantage if candidates were aware of the criteria so that they know how to attain marks. It would be helpful, for example, if they were aware that they need to convey as much **relevant** information as they can as **clearly** as they can; that it is important to give opinions / express ideas and points of view and to develop these – usually by providing reasons for their views; that they will be rewarded for a variety of vocabulary and structure and for attempting more complex sentences; that the use of more than one verb tense will be required to reach the top band under Range of Language.
- **Materials** – Some candidates omit from their pieces of work information which is essential for the examiner during the assessment process. One way to avoid this would be to give each candidate a standard response sheet prepared by the teacher which includes the following information: Centre number, a space for the candidate's name and number, Task 1 or Task 2, the title of the task and the bullet points and then lines for the candidate response. For example:

Centre Number 40404	Candidate Name
Component Code 46954	
Candidate Number	Task 1 Title: My Free Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List here all the bullet points you have given your candidates (in English!) 	
<hr/> <hr/>	

This will ensure that all information required is submitted, it will also ensure that each candidate is aware of the exact title and has easy access to the bullet points at the time of writing up the task. Asking candidates simply to write the title on a piece of A4 paper created a notable problem this year: the teacher's title was *How I spend my holidays*, the candidate transcribed this as *How I spent my holidays* – the difference is clearly significant.

- **The write-up** – Candidates should be made aware that their final piece must be written in one single session of up to 60 minutes. Whilst some candidates wrote impressive responses within this time, others clearly struggled to get everything they wanted to write down on paper in time and stopped mid-paragraph or even mid-sentence. There are, of course, marks available for a well-organised structure and candidates would be well advised to keep an eye on the clock and to try to round off their piece in an organised way even if they have to leave out some of the information they were originally intending to include.

- **How much to write** – Whilst it is true that it is the quality not the quantity of the work that affects the assessment outcome, guidance is provided in the specification: 200-350 words across both tasks if aiming at grades G-D; 400-600 words across both tasks if aiming at grades C-A*. Candidates should be aware of this guidance and that the shorter their response, the more difficult it becomes to meet the upper bands of assessment criteria for Content, and, therefore, for Range of Language and Accuracy. There is no upper limit on the number of words.

Sending materials to the examiner

- It is helpful if all paperwork for each candidate is secured by a treasury tag. Please be sure to include for each candidate:
 - A Candidate Record Form for each candidate (check that this has been signed appropriately and that you have indicated whether or not the candidate has used a Task Planning Form)
 - A Task Planning Form for each task (if used by the candidate)
 - A copy of the task sheet for each task, making the title clear and providing the bullet points used
 - Two pieces of work (if you are only submitting one piece of work for a candidate, please make this clear)
- Having now collated all necessary paperwork for each candidate, remember to send all materials to the examiner in the AQA envelope provided by **7 May**.

Advice to candidates

- Once you know the title of your task and your teacher has given you the bullet points to help you structure your controlled assessment, think carefully about how you intend to write about each one and prepare to write as much as you can and as clearly and accurately as you can.
- It will improve your mark if you can use a variety of vocabulary and structures, if you can express opinions clearly (not necessarily just variations on *me gusta...* try other ways of expressing opinions, like *Me parece que...* / *Yo diría que...* / *Mucha gente piensa que.... pero yo no estoy de acuerdo....*) and, when you can, justify these opinions by giving a reason. It also helps if you can use different tenses by saying what you did in the past, and/or what you are going to do or will do in the future, for example.
- You are allowed to use a Task Planning Form on which you may write up to 40 words (in Spanish and/or English) and you may take this Form into the Controlled Assessment with you once it has been checked by your teacher. Be sure to spell words accurately on this sheet so that they will be accurate in your Assessment. It might be wise to include the same order of bullet points on your Task Planning Form as the teacher gave you on the Task Sheet and then jot down a few words next to each one. If you are worried you may forget what a Spanish word means, you could write the English translation next to it, as long as the English word is included in your final count. Remember not to use conjugated verbs (parts of verbs in whichever tense, e.g. *voy, fui, iré*); if you want to jot down verbs, you can only include infinitives (e.g. *jugar, comer, salir*).

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- You are allowed to use a Spanish-English/English-Spanish dictionary when you write up your Assessment. You should use this to look up occasional words, but do not waste too much time looking up lots of words; you only have 60 minutes and you need to write as full a response as you can. Remember that your dictionary is likely to contain verb tables and you could always use it to check that you have written the part of the verb/the tense of the verb accurately.
 - Be sure that everything you write is relevant to the title.
 - Try to write as much as you can about each bullet point but keep an eye on the clock! Remember you only have 60 minutes. If you follow the order of the bullet points provided, this should bring a well-organised structure to your piece, but if time is running out you might choose to round off the piece neatly even if you have to cut short what you were intending to write.
 - To sum up, prove to the examiner just how good your Spanish is!

Guidance Notes for Examiners

The following guidance, provided to examiners during the marking period, is reproduced for information.

1. Exactly what do examiners mark?

- They mark the candidate's response to the title.
- They do **not** mark a response to the bullet points which have the status of guidance. The candidate may choose to ignore the bullet points completely.
- The response must be relevant to the title.

2. Must the title relate directly to the Contexts defined in the specification?

No. The title can be anything.

3. How is the title identified?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene-setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.

4. What is a relevant response?

- The response must be relevant to the task.
- Candidates are not penalised for not responding to the scene-setting details.

5. What if there is a significant amount of irrelevant material?

- It would affect the mark for CONTENT.
- The relevant material should still be assessed for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY.

6. What if there is a significant duplication of material across the two pieces of work submitted?

- The same material cannot be credited twice.
- Incidental and occasional overlap do not count as duplication.

7. What if it is clear the wording is identical to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of the tasks from other candidates at the same centre?

The work is referred to AQA Irregularities and Malpractice department.

8. Does the number of words affect assessment?

- The quality not the quantity of work affects the assessment outcome.
- 200-350 words across both tasks if aiming at grades D-G, 400-600 if aiming at grades A*-C, is for **guidance** only.
- Obviously, the shorter the assignment, the more difficult it becomes to meet the upper bands of assessment criteria for CONTENT (and therefore other categories.)
- There is no *upper* limit on the number of words. The whole piece is read and marked.

9. How does the CONTENT mark affect the marks for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY?

Content Mark	Maximum Mark for Range of Language	Maximum Mark for Accuracy
0	0	0
1 – 3	1 – 4	1-2
4 – 6	1 – 6	1-3
7 – 9	1 – 8	1-4
10 – 12	1 – 10	1-5
13 – 15	1 – 10	1-5

10. In the upper band for CONTENT (13-15), what evidence is required for “Well organised structure”?

- A sound ordering of ideas, a coherent structure – these are sufficient.
- There does **not** need to be a formal essay structure.

11. The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment are they separated out in order to quantify them?

- No. They are all viewed as one notion. Ideas, points of view and opinions are the same for assessment purposes.
- In terms of evidence, there must be more than one instance of the above.

12. The 4-6 band for CONTENT indicates: “Simple opinions are expressed”. Must there be more than one opinion expressed?

- Yes – there should be a minimum of two.
- This could be very simple, eg ‘I like French. I like Spanish. France is good.’ = 3 simple opinions.

13. The criteria for CONTENT in the two top bands refer to “explain ideas and points of view.” How may that be demonstrated?

- Opinions should be explained or justified with reasons.
- In terms of evidence, at least two opinions or points of view must be explained or justified.

14. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE what evidence is required for “verb tenses used successfully” in the 9-10 band?

- This does **not** mean reference to different **time frames**.
- There must be a combination of a minimum of two different **tense constructions**.
- The use of the present tense plus time marker to refer to the future does not count as a future tense. However in Spanish the immediate future (ie, *voy a + infinitive*) is acceptable as a separate tense.
- All other present tense constructions which refer to different time frames are **not** acceptable as anything other than the present tense.
- The present subjunctive does not constitute a different tense when the rest of the task is written in the present indicative.
- In a given piece of work, there should be a minimum of one instance of a tense used which is other than the default tense used.
- To fulfil the descriptor ‘verb tenses are used successfully’, there needs to be evidence that the candidate can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors but provided they do not prevent communication, they can be credited.
- The use of different tenses does not guarantee a mark in the 9-10 band.
- In the 7-8 band, it could be that the use of different tenses constitutes evidence of ‘more complex sentences’.
- There is no requirement for evidence of three tenses used across BOTH pieces of work.

15. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE, what would provide evidence of ‘more complex sentences’ in the two top bands?

- A range of different structures leading to more varied, longer sentences.
- Subordinating conjunctions could be one way of producing more complex sentences but are not an absolute requirement. Adverbial conjunctions, for example, could also provide sound evidence.

16. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE, what would constitute evidence for “attempts at longer sentences using appropriate linking words” in the 5-6 band?

Repeated dependence on simple connectives (‘and.....and.....and.....’) would be an example of this.

17. For ACCURACY, is there an implicit requirement for different tenses to be in evidence?

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. Examiners do not consider range of tenses when assessing Accuracy.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.