



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Spanish

46954

(Specification 4695)

Unit 4: Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There was a wide 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. Students who had a sound grammatical knowledge and made good use of the Task Planning Form almost invariably scored highly. Those who tried to set down from memory something learnt from a pre-prepared piece more often than not failed to score well. The frequent problem was that they wrote half-remembered sentences that often contained wrong verb endings or they missed out key items of vocabulary and what they wrote often failed to communicate.

Titles chosen often had a profound effect upon the outcome. A general title (My holidays, My home and Local Area, My Lifestyle, My Free Time) is likely to be most successful since the piece of writing will be assessed according to its relevance to that title. It is thus crucial that Centres provide bullet points which are relevant to the title chosen; some students were penalised because they responded to bullet points provided but which were irrelevant to the title.

Titles included:

- those suggested in the specification (pages 69-70). *My Life as 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. 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 students better in such cases.
- those available on the AQA website, 'Additional Exemplar Tasks' (<http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/pdf/AQA-4655-4670-4665-4630-4695-4645-W-TRB-AETCAWSAUT09.PDF>) *Save my town!* was a title that allowed more able students to shine, though others would have benefited from a more general title like *The area where I live* to ensure that bullet points were attainable and fully relevant.
- adaptations of coursework titles from the legacy specification. *Am I fit and healthy?* remained a popular option. At best, students 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 students often did little more than list what they eat for various meals.
- those designed by Centres – often following advice from the AQA Coursework Advisers. Some teachers successfully devised tasks which were particularly relevant to their students: *My Life as a Teenager*, for example, which often brought more personalised responses than other titles which sometimes led to very similar responses from almost all students within a Centre.

Advice to Centres

Choosing your task

- Choose a title which is broad enough to ensure that students' responses are fully relevant to that task and ensure the bullet points provided elicit information which is also relevant to that title. A key aspect of the Content marking 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*.
- Please note that **titles must be in English**.
- Choose a title which suits the ability of your students. Tasks which involve students writing about environmental issues, for example, often suit able students but cause difficulties for less able students. On the other hand, a title like *Me and my family* does not always give the more able students scope to demonstrate the quality of their written Spanish.
- When devising tasks, refer to the assessment criteria so that the bullet points you include set out to elicit these requirements. For example, students 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*.
- Devise bullet points, each of which will allow students 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 students to follow that sequence; this should bring a well organised structure to the response.
- Unlike the Speaking Test, the bullet points only have the status of guidance. Students will not be penalised if they miss out bullet points as long as their response is relevant to the title.
- Ensure that students 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 better student 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 students

- **Drafts** – Students 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 students 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. They need to take care with the spelling of the English word they are seeking to translate and they would do well to check the word they have found in the Spanish-English section of the dictionary to ensure it is appropriate.
- **Task Planning Forms** – Students 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 students who used them this year. **Please note that as of 2011, the use of pictures will not be permitted on Task Planning Forms.** 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 students writing too many words or including conjugated verbs – sometimes still visible in spite of an attempted deletion. Please be sure to check your students’ 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 students 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 students 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** – Since there is no need to use Examination Board stationery, it is important that each student is instructed by the teacher to include all of the following information: Centre number, student’s name and number, component code (46954), **Task 1 or Task 2** and the title of the task (which is the same as that set by the teacher).
- **The write-up** – Students should be made aware that their final piece must be written in one single session of 60 minutes. Whilst some students 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 students 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* (page 11). Students 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. While there is no upper limit on the number of words, the writing of some students who produced very long answers often showed a marked decline in quality towards the end.

Sending materials to the examiner

Sincere thanks to the great majority of Centres who provided all necessary documentation in an efficient and helpful way.

- It is helpful if students' individual portfolios are fastened together securely. Treasury tags are the preferred method. Please be sure to include for each student:
 - A Candidate Record Form for each task (check that this has been signed appropriately and that you have indicated whether or not the student has used a Task Planning Form)
 - A Task Planning Form for each task (if used by the student)
 - 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 student, please make this clear**)
- Having now collated all necessary paperwork for each student, please place the work in student order for the entire Centre and send all materials to the examiner in the AQA envelope provided by **7 May**.
- You must ensure that you send the **originals**, and not copies. You must also ensure that you do not put any marks on the work.

Administration

It is not possible to submit work electronically to AQA.

AQA will return students' work in advance of the publication of results. It will have no marks or annotations written on it.

At the time of publication of results, centres will receive the total mark out of 60 for Unit 4 as well as the UMS score for the unit. In order to access the breakdown of the mark out of 60 (ie the mark out of 30 per task and the mark awarded for each assessment criterion), centres must register with e-AQA and use the Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA). It is only through ERA that a breakdown of marks will be made available.

Criteria for Assessment

It would be an advantage if students 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.

Advice to Students

- Once you know the title of your task and your teacher has given you the bullet points to use in 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*).
- 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. To be sure you have selected the appropriate word, it is best to check it in the Spanish-English section of the dictionary. Remember, also, 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 examining period, is reproduced below for information.

Assessment issues

It should be noted that the following guidance contains examples from French, German and Spanish.

1. Task Planning Forms (TPF)

If more than 40 words have been used, examiners will ignore when awarding a mark, the parts of the student's response (ie the phrases or clauses) which use words noted on the TPF beyond the first 40.

If a conjugated verb appears on the TPF, examiners will ignore the clause(s) where that verb is used when awarding a mark for Range of Language and Accuracy. If the sentence (with the conjugated verb discounted) still communicates, then it may be counted towards the mark for Content. The same applies to the use of codes (eg a picture of an eye to represent the Spanish word *hay*).

Visuals on Task Planning Forms are permitted for the last time in June 2011 and must not appear on Task Planning Forms in June 2012 and beyond.

2. Exactly what do examiners mark?

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

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

No. The title can be anything.

4. How do examiners identify the title?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene-setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.
- See examples in *Additional Exemplar Tasks: Controlled Assessment Writing and Speaking* on the AQA website within the Teacher Resource Bank for your language at <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/languages.php?id=11&prev=10>, where the task and scene setting are clearly separated.

5. What is a relevant response?

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

6. And what if there is a significant amount of irrelevant material?

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

7. What if a student has omitted an entire aspect of the title?

A student with the task 'Home, local area and special occasions' who writes nothing about home area, for example, could be considered to have completed two thirds of the task. The piece could therefore be eligible for the 10-12 band for Content, assuming the piece fulfils the criteria for that band in other ways. This would still allow the student access to all mark bands for language.

8. 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.

9. What if it is clear the student's entire response is identical (ie exactly the same, word for word) to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of tasks from other students at the same centre?

The work would be referred to AQA's Irregularities/Malpractice Department.

10. 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 will be read and marked by the examiner.

11. 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

12. The criteria for assessment

(a) CONTENT

The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment, how are they viewed?

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 this feature.

How do examiners decide between the 3 marks available for CONTENT in each mark band?

If the descriptor fits the piece exactly, then the examiner will award the middle mark in the band. If there is strong evidence of the descriptors and the examiner had been considering the band above, the highest of the three marks would be awarded. If there is just enough evidence and the examiner had been considering the band below, then the lowest mark in the band would be awarded.

13-15 marks

- Students provide a **fully relevant** and **detailed** response with **almost all** information conveyed **clearly** and **developed**.
- They must offer ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2) and at least two of them must be explained or justified.
- The piece should have a well organised structure, ie a sound ordering of ideas but **not** necessarily a formal essay structure or an introduction, conclusion, etc.

10-12 marks

- The response will be **mostly** relevant and **a lot** of information will still be provided and conveyed **clearly** and will **generally** be developed.
- There is a requirement to give **and explain** ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2)

7-9 marks

- The response will be **generally** relevant with **quite a lot** of information conveyed **clearly**.
- There will still be evidence of an ability to **develop** ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions / points of view (minimum 2).

4-6 marks

- The response is **limited** but **some** relevant information will be conveyed.
- There will be **some development** of basic ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2). These could be very simple, eg: 'I like French. I like Spanish. France is good.' = 3 simple opinions.

1-3 marks

- The response is **very limited** with **little** relevant information conveyed.
- There will be **no real structure**.

0 marks

- No relevant information is communicated in a coherent fashion. If zero is awarded for Content, zero must also be awarded for Range of Language and Accuracy.

(b) RANGE OF LANGUAGE

- The immediate future (ie *je vais* + infinitive, *voy a* + infinitive, etc) counts as a future tense. A present tense verb with a future time marker (eg *Nächste Woche fahre ich...*) does not. The immediate future (eg *je vais aller*) is seen as a different tense from the future (eg *j'irai*).
- The present subjunctive does not count as a separate tense from the present indicative. A construction using the present tense to refer to the past (eg *Je joue du piano depuis 2 ans / Llevo 5 años estudiando español / Ich spiele Klavier seit 2 Jahren*) counts as the present tense. Similarly a construction using the present tense to refer to the future (eg *J'espère aller à l'université / ich hoffe, auf die Universität zu gehen / Espero ir al cine*) counts as the present.

9-10 marks

- A variety of **tenses** must be used **successfully**. This means two or more tenses and a minimum of one instance of a tense use which is other than the default tense used. The tenses could come from the same time frame (for example the preterite and the imperfect) but a greater range of tenses will add to the complexity of the language used. An overall judgement needs to be made as to whether "verb tenses are used successfully." There needs to be evidence that the student can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors

(and in German occasional word order errors) but provided they do not prevent communication they can be credited.

- The use of different tenses is not a 'passport' to the 9-10 band.
- There must be evidence of **successful use of complex sentences**. This could be:
 - use of subordinating conjunctions (but this is not an absolute requirement)
 - use of adverbial phrases (*al llegar...*, *après avoir fait cela...*, etc).
 - use of infinitive constructions after a preposition (e.g. *sans hésiter / ohne zu essen / despues de ir*), after an adjective (eg *C'est facile à faire / einfach zu tun / fácil hacerlo*) or after a verb (eg modal verbs; *je préfère vivre en ville / Ich mag fernsehen / prefiero ir* etc)
 - a range of different structures leading to longer, more varied sentences (eg *suelo ir* rather than *voy, j'ai l'intention de...* rather than *je veux..ich habe vor* rather than *ich will...*)
 - use of pronoun objects
 - use of adverbial conjunctions (eg *heureusement, cependant, leider, sin embargo*) or prepositional phrases (eg *par contre / zum Beispiel / por ejemplo*)
 - regular use of connectives to form longer sentences.

However, this is GCSE so even in the highest mark band examiners are not necessarily looking for use of the subjunctive or similar grammatical structures.

- There needs to be a **wide range of vocabulary**. This means that students will not be too repetitive in the words they use.

7-8 marks

- **Mainly successful** use of complex sentences. The note above about what constitutes complexity for the 9-10 band will also apply here.
- No specific requirement to use more than one tense but the use of different tenses may constitute evidence of 'more complex sentences.'
- There must be a **good range** of vocabulary, so students in this band will again be trying to avoid repetition of the more common words.

5-6 marks

- There will be some attempts made at longer sentences using appropriate linking words. At this level this will often mean repeated dependence on simple connectives such as 'and' / 'but', though 'because' will also be found fairly frequently when students attempt to explain ideas and points of view. Use of other forms of complex sentences will often not be wholly successful.
- There should be **some variety** of vocabulary, though students will generally be using a more basic range of vocabulary than in the higher bands and there may be more repetition.

3-4 marks

- Language will be basic, with **short, simple sentences**. Attempts at longer sentences and more difficult constructions will usually not be successful.
- Vocabulary will generally be appropriate to the basic needs of the task but will be **limited**, with a lot of repetition and overuse of a few common verbs such as *to be, to have, to like, to go*.

1-2 marks

- Little understanding of language structure shown with just the occasional short phrase which is correctly used.
- Vocabulary will be very **basic**, with only isolated words correctly used. Vocabulary will often be anglicised.

(c) ACCURACY

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

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. The range of tenses is not considered when assessing Accuracy.

There are 5 marks available to cover the whole range of ability (i.e. 8 grades). This means the mark awarded could represent quite different performances. Moreover, a mark of 5 will not be used only to represent an A* performance.

5 marks

- **Largely accurate.**
- Major errors only usually appear in complex structures.
- There may be some minor errors (eg gender).
- Verbs and tenses are **secure**.

4 marks

- Errors occur but the piece is **generally accurate**. Mistakes made will not generally impede communication.
- Verbs and tenses are **usually correct**.

3 marks

- **More accurate than inaccurate**, though there will often be fairly frequent errors.
- The intended **meaning is clear**.
- Verbs and tenses are **sometimes unsuccessful**.

2 marks

- **Many errors**.
- Mistakes **often impede communication**.
- Verbs are **rarely accurate**.

1 mark

- **Frequent errors**.
- Mistakes **regularly impede communication**.
- **Limited understanding** of basic linguistic structures.

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 www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.