

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCSE Spanish (5SP04) Paper 01

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Unit requirements

Candidates are required to submit two pieces of written work of at least 100 words; those aiming for a C and above should produce around 200 words for each piece of writing. Each task must be produced in one session of up to 60 minutes under controlled conditions. Tasks of fewer than 100 words are capped at a mark of 6 for Communication and content. For less able candidates, two shorter pieces of work can be offered to make up one unit. The two pieces may be from the same general topic area or from different topic areas. Centres may set their own tasks or choose or adapt one from the stimulus material provided by Edexcel. The two pieces have to differ in content and purpose. They should also differ from the tasks set for the Speaking assessments in Unit 2. Most of the work seen during this series complied with the above requirements and a lot of good quality work was produced by candidates.

Task setting

Each task must have a stimulus, but this can consist of just a title or heading. It can either be in English or Spanish. The best tasks included four to six bullet points which encouraged candidates to give descriptions and opinions, and to use a variety of tenses. The wording of the stimulus is important. It is better to use the rubric "You could mention ..." rather than "You must mention ..." since the latter could potentially penalise candidates who have not covered all the bullet points listed. Examiners were instructed to take note of omissions by candidates in assessing the mark for Communication and content.

Popular tasks noted by examiners included:

- Holidays
- School
- Work experience
- My town
- The environment
- An interview with a famous person

Centres are encouraged to give plenty of thought to the selected tasks. It may be the case with a range of candidate abilities to set two or more entirely different tasks. For more able candidates it is important to ensure that the tasks set will enable them to access the higher mark bands of the assessment criteria. The task should encourage candidates to expand on ideas and points of view. It should give them the opportunity to use a variety of vocabulary and complex language structures. The task should also enable candidates to use a wide range of tenses. More successful tasks included accounts where candidates could write at length and maintain a logical, linked thread throughout their work.

Certain tasks are less suitable for less able candidates. A film review demands a confident use of a wide range of vocabulary and language structures for it to be successful. Letters of application for jobs or letters of complaint to a hotel are not always good choices as they tend to limit candidate responses and follow set language patterns. Celebrity or sport person interviews are usually not very successful as there is very little

opportunity for linking ideas throughout the response and candidates often do not have the language skills to express themselves adequately.

Candidates should be encouraged to produce individual responses to a task stimulus. The best candidate responses were those which contained both an element of individuality and of creativity. Some examiners noted that some candidates from the same centres were producing responses which followed a very similar rigid pattern and structure. Whilst it is recognised that candidates may have access to the same resources throughout the planning and preparation period, the final responses should be varied and original. The best candidate responses were entirely relevant to the stimulus, well structured with paragraphs and correct punctuation and were well presented with neat, legible handwriting.

Form CA4 and dictionaries

Candidates are allowed to use notes in the controlled conditions session. The notes should be written on the CA4 form and may include no more than 30 words and up to 5 small pictures. The use of this form is optional. Most candidates used this form well and it was a support for them. Centres are asked to indicate whether this form has been used or not on the CM4 Mark Sheet.

The use of a dictionary is also allowed, but some candidates who had access to one were not able to use it properly and produced many errors due to this.

Assessment Criteria

The best candidate responses communicate clearly throughout with a wide range of ideas and opinions presented and linked using a range of adverbs and adverbial phrases. A candidate who tries to express ideas beyond their capabilities will produce work which is likely not to communicate very well. Repetition of vocabulary and language structures and simple lists will not attract high marks. The best responses will also contain a range of verbs and tense formations and candidates will be unlikely to score high marks for Communication and content if these are not present.

With regard to language, the best responses include a variety of vocabulary and complex structures. Complex structures might include some of the following:

- Subordinate clauses
- Variety of tenses
- Comparative, superlative & possessive adjectives
- Present subjunctive
- Negative and interrogative forms
- Use of *desde hace*
- Direct and indirect object pronouns
- Adverbs and adverbial phrases
- Connectives and linking words

A mark of 4 or 5 may only be awarded for accuracy if the candidate response contains enough examples of complex structures. A response

which is very accurate but contains only simple, straightforward language will not attract a high mark for accuracy.

Administration

Most centres adhered to all of the guidelines regarding administration. However, there are a number administrative issues which are yet to be entirely resolved. They include the following:

- Use of the old-style Candidate Mark Sheet instead of the up-to-date one (CM4) which can be found on the website
- Failure of candidate and/or teacher to sign the Mark Sheet (CM4)
- Failure to include or sign the Attendance Register
- Failure to include a copy of any stimulus material
- Work not in candidate number order
- Work not in the order as stated on the Candidate Mark Sheet – (please place Task 1 on top of Task 2)
- Inclusion of drafts which were not labelled as such so it was difficult for the examiner to see which response was completed under controlled conditions
- Work despatched to the incorrect moderator/examiner
- Work not received by the published deadline
- Work not secured effectively. Examiners prefer work to be stapled together rather than submitted in plastic pockets.

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