

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE Spanish (4SP0)  
Paper 3

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## **International GCSE Spanish**

### **Paper 3 Speaking**

#### **General comments**

Centres are to be reminded that this is the final year of the current Specification and from Summer 2014 the oral will become a compulsory component for the awarding of International GCSE Spanish. Once more, there was an increase in the number of students entered for this component and most of them were well prepared for the demands of the oral examination. There were some centres that failed to follow the rubric of the Specification and, as such, often limited the performance of the students and their subsequent marks.

The best teacher examiners knew the strengths and weaknesses of their students and asked questions accordingly. They were able to explore the linguistic boundaries of their students appropriately with unprepared comments and questions interspersed with a more standardised set of questions around familiar topics.

Home and Abroad was the most popular topic, particular for the photograph. I would encourage centres to ensure the photograph is explored fully before moving on to more general questions. The best choices of photograph/image allowed teacher examiners to explore the photograph in detail. These were often photographs with lots of action and people so that students could be asked varied questions.

#### **Conduct of the Speaking Examinations**

Students were often well briefed for their opening presentation, scoring good marks for Content despite a significant drop in performance in the subsequent follow-up discussion, leading to reduced marks for Spontaneity. Similarly, the best demonstration of a range of tenses tended to surface in the first conversation, with subsequent referrals to past and future tenses relying more heavily on conjugation of the verb '*ir*'. Whilst it is perfectly acceptable to have some questions in the present tense relating to people in photographs, students must show a variety of tenses in their responses. A common feature used to highlight the preterite, for example, was a question on who took the picture which was generally accurately constructed. A good strategy used by a number of centres consisted of the student being asked to speculate what had happened before the picture was taken and what they thought would happen afterwards. The best students were very astute in ensuring that a range of tenses was included within the initial one minute presentation.

The best students were given the opportunity to use a wide range of structures and a full range of tenses. Some students with a good command of Spanish lost marks as they only gave brief answers to questions. In order to achieve the top mark for Spontaneity and Fluency students must be very responsive to the question asked, expanding the answer as much as

possible. Teacher examiners should also refrain from correcting a student's Spanish as the student cannot be credited for their response.

A number of teachers encouraged students to show off their full range of abilities and pushed them appropriately with unprepared comments and questions, although very often others delivered a more standardised set of questions around familiar topics with little variety or reaction to what students actually said. In some cases, the degree of rehearsal was such that students routinely produced the same answers to the same questions. Centres are to be reminded that the three conversations are marked individually and independently and thus a range of linguistic structures should be evident in all three conversations.

Teacher examiners who only ask questions in the present tense or asked closed questions also disadvantaged students at times. Questions such as 'What is your name?' or 'When is your birthday?' are by their very nature demanding of a brief answer. Often teacher examiners struggled to formulate questions and the best teacher interviewers had clearly prepared thoroughly for the examination. Similarly, good practice amongst teacher interviewers is that strong students are stretched with more challenging questions whereas weaker students are given less demanding questions. This can only serve to ensure that the examination is a positive experience for the student rather than an ordeal where they struggle to answer questions. There is a lot of sympathy for a student who struggles to answer in the present tense and is then faced with a 'Si' clause question.

Most conversations were timed within the specified parameters, teachers should aim to complete the examination within the 10 minutes; some exceeded this by up to 3 minutes and, more rarely, some recordings were too short, which end up self-penalising. Centres are reminded to check the quality of each recording (replaying the end of each student to check clear audibility) and verify that all three conversations have indeed been covered. A stopwatch which is reset at the beginning of each of the three topic areas would act both as a check that all areas had been covered as well as ensure that time had been properly allocated across the test. In addition, it is helpful to state explicitly when each new topic area is about to begin (in English) both for the student and the examiner.

### **Administration of the Examination**

The administration of this examination was completed efficiently and professionally by most centres. Excellent administration was carried out by those centres where both pages (41 and 42) of the Specification had been photocopied allowing examiners to enter their marks appropriately, CDS/USBs and cassettes had been labelled appropriately and wrapped carefully and the picture discussed was attached. Attaching a clearly visible identifying label to the memory stick is good practice as memory sticks have a natural ability to slide out of plastic envelopes. The excellent quality of recording that can be reproduced by the use of digital recorders cannot be underestimated and teacher examiners would be advised that this is the best form of recording. The move away from cassettes towards CDs and memory sticks was positive. Centres are reminded that audio cassette

recordings will not be admissible in Summer 2014. Centres must also now use a new cover sheet which can be found at the back of the new Specification.

## **Grade Boundaries**

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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