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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Spanish (4SP1) Paper 02R

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## General Comments

This summer was the first series of the reformed International GCSE Spanish examination. The new paper differs from the previous specification in a number of significant ways, including in the provision of the alternative R paper for candidates sitting the exam in different time zones.

The equivalent paper on the old specification opened with questions based on pictures. The two opening questions now provide a higher level of challenge and are based on medium length texts with a complete-the-sentence format. Q03 is similar in format to its predecessor, being a who-said-what exercise, but Q04 is a new question style: a note-taking exercise. Q05 will look familiar, as it is a long reading passage with questions and answers in Spanish, of the same style as the long reading question of the previous specification. One difference here though, is that one of the texts used for reading comprehension will be from a literary work. Prior knowledge of the text is not needed, and the questions will test comprehension in the way they would with any other style of text.

The two writing questions now appear together in Section B of the paper. Q06 is a short writing task where candidates have to include 4 stimulus words. This is an important difference to Q03b from the previous specification, where the 4 words were simply suggestions. During the marking of this first series it was rare to find a candidate who had not included the words, some either did not use all four or else changed them from their printed form. Centres are strongly advised to ensure that candidates are trained to use **all** of the words and to include them **verbatim**. The challenge of the task lies in the candidate's ability to use the word "trabajo", for example, rather than "trabajar". Candidates who do not use the words verbatim are unlikely to achieve full marks for Communication and Content. Attention should also be paid to the title of the Q06 task, rather than just to the stimulus words, as examiners want to read about the topic prescribed. This year, that was the pressures of school, rather than just a description of school. Candidates who do not, at least partially, address the topic, will not score top marks for Communication and Content.

Q07 is the same format as the long writing question of the old specification. There are three choices of essay, each requiring a different style of writing (e.g. a blog, an email, an article) with four bullet points. The bullet points will encourage the use of a variety of tenses and an opinion. Candidates often strive to simulate the format of an article or a blog in the way it is laid out on the page. While examiners enjoy reading these essays, there is no penalty for simply writing a text that displays no such formatting.

On the grammar exercise in Q08, candidates are given a text with ten gaps and a word (e.g. an infinitive or an adjective) that must be manipulated to fit correctly into each gap. One point is awarded for each word correctly modified. Subject-verb agreement, two verb combinations, tenses and adjective agreement are all tested. The rubric reminds candidates that some words may not need to be changed at all (eg where an infinitive is grammatically correct, or a masculine singular adjective form is required). There are grammatical items of different levels of complexity, so that the exercise is accessible to

candidates of all abilities. Importantly, there is scope here for the most able to be stretched.

### **Question 1**

This question was a text about a champion swimmer, where candidates had to select the correct sentence ending from a choice of 4.

### **Question 2**

This question was about cleaning plastic from beaches and candidates had to complete sentences summarising the text, by selecting from a bank of words. Candidates needed to consider not just meaning, but also grammar in order to make their selection. For example, when completing the sentence: "*La...puede ser peligrosa*", some candidates considered that "chemicals" might be a logical possibility, but "*productos químicos*" from the word bank, could be ruled out as grammatically incompatible.

### **Question 3**

This question was based on testimonies by three people about the safety of shopping online. Candidates had to indicate which of the three had made each of the 7 statements. The instructions inform the candidates that some statements may refer to more than one person or to none of them. Candidates had to place 8 crosses in the appropriate boxes. Most candidates followed this instruction, although there were some who gave more than or fewer than 8. Where more than 8 were offered, only the first 8 were considered.

### **Question 4**

This question was based on the Every-day life, Traditions and Communities sub-topic and was a literary text taken from Camilo José Cela's novel *La Colmena*. A knowledge of the text was not necessary. The text described some of the characters to be found in a certain neighbourhood. Ten items of information from the text were required in note form. These were a mixture of numbers, individual words and short phrases. Q04a and Q04g proved to be the easiest, with most candidates scoring here. It was surprising that for Q04b and Q04c, many responses did not include a number, despite the prompt stating "Número de...". There were 2 marks on offer in Q04d, many candidates scored one mark for saying that Martín was walking, but fewer gained the second mark for him carrying or having a newspaper. The tense of the prompt (present: "*Lo que hace Martín*") was important here. He is not currently reading the paper, although he had read some of it already (past) and was planning to read more of it (future), so any mention of reading did not score a mark.

Some answers could be given successfully using words from the text, but often these 'lifts' were not properly targeted or were ambiguous. While in Q04d, for the mother's feelings on arriving at the park, "se enfadé" was accepted (this is not specifically a

grammar exercise and the addition of the 'se' makes the 3<sup>rd</sup> person intention clear), "enfadé" or "me enfadé" could not be credited. Similarly, in *Q04e*, "ignorando las risas" was not rewardable, but "las risas" was. In *Q04g*, examiners saw several examples of grammatically incorrect direct lifts from the text, eg "trabajando", "gane dinero". Many of these were tolerated as they would be understandable in the context.

### **Question 5**

This question was a text about using smart watches to cheat in exams. A common error seen in *Q05b* was the lift "no eran muy conocidos". This needed the addition of a subject (eg estos relojes) in order to gain a mark. The answers for *Q05c* and *Q05d* and *Q05e* were occasionally mixed up, although these were the sections where most candidates scored. *Q05f* proved to be problematic for candidates, who often copied a chunk of the text but missed the key ideas of needing special glasses or to look at the screen from directly in front. *Q05g* was often answered successfully, although the meaningless fragment 'popularicen y sean más baratos' was often offered. *Q05h* was generally answered with another partial lift that could not be rewarded, such as "drones que los controlan".

### **Question 6**

This question was a short writing task about future plans. The 4 stimulus words were generally included, although "extranjero" was the word most likely to have been missed out or used inappropriately. Some candidates decided to change "vivir" into "vivo" or "viviré", while "en 5 años" was occasionally changed into "en el futuro". Candidates are unlikely to score full marks for Content and Communication if they do not use the 4 words or phrases verbatim.

Many candidates were faithful to the title and wrote a description of their ambitions, but there were some who wrote a pre-prepared essay that did not fit the brief. They did not score highly. Although it is not necessary for every word to focus on the topic of the title, there needs to be some recognition of it for maximum marks for Communication and Content to be awarded.

In terms of language, there were many candidates who far surpassed the level of complexity and accuracy expected for International GCSE. The most common language errors were with verb and adjectival agreement.

Many candidates wrote much more than was necessary; it is quite possible to earn full marks by writing the suggested 60 – 75 words.

### **Question 7**

This question was a longer writing tasks which produced an array of essays, often containing colourful and idiomatic language. *Q07a*, the second most popular of the three options, was an email about a job. The bullet points instructed candidates to explain their interest in the job, to say how they earned money in the past, to give an opinion on working at the weekend and to say how the world of work will change in the future. This task was completed well. The bullet point about the future of the job

market, was the least well addressed, with many candidates simply stating what they would like to do as work in the future. These responses were given some credit as being partially successful.

Q07b was the least popular option, answered by a very small number of candidates. It was about special events. Often this option was chosen by very able candidates. Q07c was the most popular choice and was about school. It needed to contain information about a typical day at school, an opinion on discipline, something that you did to anger your teachers and how stress can be reduced for students. The past tense needed for the third bullet point provided a lot of challenge; in fact many candidates misinterpreted this bullet point, not focussing on “enfadó” and simply wrote about their teachers, ignoring the requirement to say what had been done to anger them.

### **Question 8**

The grammar test in Q08 was based on a text about the smallest apartment in the world. This question provided a significant challenge. The elements that most candidates correctly manipulated were: (e) *acogedores*, (f) *gran* and (h) *participar*. Few candidates managed to spot that the singular was required in (j), where *estar* needed to agree with “*mucha gente*”.

### **Advice and Guidance:**

Based on their performance in this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- When using words from the text, candidates are advised to ensure that the response offered follows logically as an answer to the question asked.
- Students should use grammar rules to narrow down the choices in Q03.
- All 4 stimulus words should be used exactly as they are printed in Q06.
- Candidates should avoid writing excessively lengthy answers to Q06.
- Candidates should be advised to practise verb conjugations in various tenses and adjective agreements in order to help with Q08.