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# A-LEVEL SPANISH

Paper 3 Speaking  
Report on the Examination

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7692  
June 2018

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Version: 1.0

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## General comments

This was the first examination of the new specification and so it was very pleasing that a great number of students had clearly prepared diligently for both aspects of the test, which was very well conducted by many teacher-examiners. The discussion of the sub-themes varied, but some of the best students used their knowledge of current affairs relevant to the Hispanic world to give astute critical evaluation of their chosen topic. There were some excellent linguistic performances from non-native speakers demonstrating a high level of fluency, highly accurate knowledge of basic tenses and the ability to make appropriate use of and effectively manipulate the more complex structures.

The range of topics chosen for the Individual Research Project (IRP) was extensive, and it was good that students had moved away from the text book topics and were keen to share and develop the knowledge gathered during their individual research. It was clear that those students who had chosen a topic that genuinely interested them were able to access the full range of marks available due to their thorough knowledge and evaluation of their chosen topic. Some students chose to use a question as their IRP title and others a statement; both approaches were equally successful.

## Administration

Given that there were some significant changes in the administration of the test it was pleasing that in the majority of cases the administration of the tests was very good. However, it is important that teacher-examiners refer to the *Instructions for the conduct of A level examinations* booklet, which is available on e-AQA.

Visiting examiners reported that arrangements at centres were very good and there were no significant issues regarding the change in procedures related to preparation time or the role of the invigilators.

## Recordings

For the teacher-conducted tests, recordings were not always of the highest quality, with sound levels fluctuating considerably and the examiner's questions frequently being clearer and louder than the student's responses. Background noise, squeaky chairs, rustling of paper close to the microphone, announcements over the school tannoy system, phones and bells ringing – these all proved intrusive at times. Students can be disadvantaged if what they say is partly or totally inaudible.

Where problems are discovered with a faulty recording and a copy is requested, centres should ensure the replacement CD or memory stick is dispatched promptly. CDs often arrived in a paper or plastic cover, without any protective wrapping and a number were damaged in transit.

Recordings should be saved in .mp3 format. File-names for individual student recordings should comply with the format laid out on p.12 of the Instructions.

A considerable number of centres did not provide the information set out on pages 11 and 12 of the Instructions when sending memory sticks and CDs. This meant there was frequently no indication of the teacher-examiner's name, which is required for completing mark forms and Teacher Tester Performance Records.

Teachers who conduct their own tests are reminded of the importance of following all instructions regarding administration. This includes:

- Full announcement at the start of each test observing the prescribed wording in the instruction booklet
- CD insert/USB label showing the order of tests, the stimulus card used with each student and the teacher-examiner's name
- Correct labelling of tracks showing component, centre and candidate numbers
- Recordings saved in mp3 format
- Checking volume levels for both student and teacher

### **Paperwork**

Most centres provided the necessary paperwork for the IRP topic. In a few cases Candidate Record Forms (CRF) were not sent to examiners of the T option, causing some delay in marking while the forms were obtained.

When completing the CRF it is important that:

- Both student and teacher sign it
- The IRP title and all headings are in English
- Sources including websites are clearly identified
- Both options studied for Paper 2 are named on the form
- Handwritten forms are legible.

Additional Answer Sheets with students' notes for Part 1 should not be submitted with the media but should be retained securely by the centre until Results' Day, when they should be destroyed confidentially.

In the case of visiting examiner tests, it is useful if spaces 3-8 on the CRF have headings rather than being left blank, so that the visiting examiner has an indication of the scope of the discussion.

### **Conduct of the Test**

#### **Preparation time**

At A-level the students have a great deal to do within the allowed 5 minute preparation time (reading the 2 cards, choosing which to answer, preparing responses to the printed questions and preparing 2 questions to ask the examiner) and so teachers are encouraged to ensure that students have plenty of opportunity throughout the course to practise preparing effectively under timed conditions.

It is worth making students aware that lack of specific knowledge of an aspect of a topic covered in a stimulus card should not prevent them from choosing that card. For example, a student who had not previously studied Castro would still have been able to access the information on Tarjeta K and respond appropriately to the printed questions without prior knowledge of Castro's dictatorship.

#### **Card Sequence**

In the majority of cases the card sequence was not an issue, but teacher-examiners are reminded of the importance of avoiding any possible overlap between the card and the student's IRP topic as

material can only be credited once within the same test. If a teacher-examiner feels that there will be overlap they should move to the next suitable card combination in the sequence table.

## Timings

Prescribed timings were adhered to by the vast majority of centres, but it is important that teacher-examiners are aware that the entire test should not exceed 18 minutes and, therefore, there needs to be a smooth transition between the various parts of the examination to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. Centres are reminded that timing begins when the first printed question is asked.

The discussion on the sub-theme lasts between 5 and 6 minutes (after which the student's notes and card should be collected in), the presentation is a maximum of 2 minutes and the subsequent discussion is between 9 and 10 minutes. Marking for an individual test stops at 18 minutes. There is a requirement that the student asks the teacher-examiner two questions within this time. Questions asked after the 6 minute maximum will not be credited, and this will impact upon the student's ability to access the full range of marks for AO2.

## Student performance

### Discussion of sub-theme

**Assessment Objective 1** Understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face to face interaction

Scores for this AO were generally good, with most students scoring 3 or above. Some teacher-examiners asked the three printed questions without follow-up questions in-between. It is important that teacher-examiners remember that there must be sufficient unpredictable elements to enable the students to access the full range of marks available for AO1. It is therefore in the student's best interests, and best practice, for teacher-examiners to ask responsive follow up questions between the three printed questions so that students can effectively develop their ideas and opinions. Teacher-examiners should also ensure that they do not allow students to deliver lengthy pre-learnt responses as these will not attract marks for AO1.

**Assessment Objective 2** Understand and respond in speech to written language drawn from a variety of sources

The scores for this AO varied considerably, with many students only scoring 2 or 3. Those students who, as a result of their own preparation or in response to appropriate teacher-examiner questions, were able to demonstrate a full understanding of all the printed material and ask appropriate questions were able to access the full range of marks available. Many students failed to fully exploit the material on the card. In cases such as these it is important that teacher-examiners ask suitable follow-up questions to ensure that the student has the opportunity to demonstrate a full understanding of all the printed material and to go beyond their prepared responses to show a deeper understanding of the content of the card. Some teacher-examiners simply read out the information on the card and asked the students to comment, but better practice would be to ask the student a question such as '*¿Qué más nos dice la tarjeta sobre...?*' to allow the student to select the relevant information from the card and develop it. Teacher-examiners are also encouraged to challenge any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the printed material on the part of the student.

### Student's questions (credited within the AO2 score)

Teacher-examiners are reminded that there is a requirement for students to ask the examiner two questions in this part of the test and, if students forget to ask questions, the teacher-examiner should verbally prompt the students to do so at a suitable time before the 6 minute maximum time. Student questions should arise from the material on the card, include a conjugated verb, elicit information or an opinion and should not be a rewording of a printed question. It is also worth noting that if students use a question such as '*¿Estás de acuerdo conmigo?*' or '*¿Qué opinas?*' it needs to be clear what statement they are referring to.

Teacher-examiners should be aware that if they feel that a student's question has not met these criteria then they can ask the student for an additional question. It is therefore good practice to ensure that students are fully aware of the criteria prior to the examination.

The teacher-examiner's response to the student's question should be brief so as not to use time available for the student to demonstrate their knowledge and linguistic skills.

If only one appropriate question is asked the score for AO2 cannot exceed 4, and if no appropriate questions are asked the AO2 score cannot exceed 3.

**Assessment Objective 3** Manipulate the language accurately, in spoken form, using a range of lexis and structure

Pleasingly, many students demonstrated a sound knowledge of the basic tenses and used a good range of vocabulary and appropriately complex language enabling them to access the full range of marks available for this AO. Pronunciation was generally very good and rarely had a significant impact on comprehension. In some cases, students went to great lengths to 'shoe horn' in unnecessarily complex phrases that native speakers would not use in spoken language and that had an adverse effect on their score for AO3. It was noted by examiners that many students struggled with the verb *sorprender* both in response to the printed question '*¿Te sorprende...?*' and as part of their response to the printed question '*¿Cómo reaccionas...?*'

The most frequent grammatical errors were:

- Incorrect numbers: students struggled with the percentages, figures and dates in the printed material
- Incorrect verb endings (even in basic tenses)
- Incorrect genders
- Incorrect adjectival agreements
- Incorrect pronoun after a reflexive verb in the infinitive
- Inappropriate use of complex structures

**Assessment Objective 4** Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken

It was pleasing to see that some students were able to access the full range of marks available for this AO. They offered good critical and analytical responses, using relevant examples from the Hispanic world to justify their opinions and support their arguments. Many students, however, failed to access the higher bands due to a lack of evaluative response and focus on target-language speaking countries/communities. Teacher-examiners are reminded that any questions they ask should be worded in such a way as to elicit responses that include detailed reference to, and conclusions drawn in relation to, practices, trends or attitudes in Spanish-speaking communities.

Many teachers asked questions of a general or personal nature that did not attract marks for AO4. Students should be made aware that using examples from or making comparisons with non-target language speaking countries will also not attract marks for AO4. Examiners commented that some students mentioned General Franco but in inappropriate contexts, including being responsible for issues in Latin American countries.

### Stimulus Cards

#### *Tarjeta A: ¿Igualdad a ser padres?*

This card was very popular but possibly not as well exploited as expected, with students quickly moving on to general changes in Hispanic families rather than focusing on the printed material. Those students who did well recognised that the emphasis was on equality for fathers rather than discrimination against women and developed their opinions accordingly. Many students, however, struggled with the concept of *qué dirán* and the word *alargar* caused problems for others. Less able students confused articles referring to *el madre* and *la padre*. It was pleasing, however, to see that many students were able to discuss family trends in Hispanic countries, citing the legalisation of gay marriage, machismo, and the fact that many Hispanic women still bear brunt of domestic chores.

#### *Tarjeta B: ¿Perjudican los móviles nuestra salud?*

This was quite a popular card, but the tendency was to talk about cyberspace in general rather than focusing on the health issues highlighted in the printed material. Many of the additional questions were of a general or personal nature, with a lack of focus on target language speaking countries or communities. Students did suggest *nomofobia* and *ciberadicción* as possible disadvantages, but there was often a lack of suitable factual information relating to the Hispanic world.

#### *Tarjeta C: La violencia de genero da miedo*

This card was very popular, with the many students who chose it engaging in informed discussions about domestic violence in the Hispanic world, organisations and individuals seeking change in the situation, and changes in attitudes to women. Many mentioned recent events such as *8M*, the *ni una más* campaign and the *la manada* case. Less able students struggled with the figures in the text and why there were so many accusations in Andalucía, and also failed to discuss the various types of violence. As with other cards, General Franco and his regime were frequently given as the reason for the current situation and the *guía de la buena esposa* was often inappropriately used as justification.

#### *Tarjeta D: ‘La educación no es un lujo, es un derecho del ser humano’ (palabras de Shakira)*

This card was one of the most popular, with performances ranging considerably. More able students demonstrated sound understanding of the extent of Shakira’s involvement in charitable work and the recognition she has received as a result. Most students understood the first bullet point, but less able students struggled with the dates and correct pronunciation of *Pies Descalzos*. The second and fourth bullet points were often misunderstood. Because of their actions, Pitbull and Dani Rovira were suggested as potentially having a negative influence, whilst Selma Hayek, Penelope Cruz, Lionel Messi and Ricky Martin were all considered to be significantly involved in social causes.

*Tarjeta E: ¿Son demasiado peligrosas las fiestas?*

This card was not very popular, and many students struggled to exploit the material on the card. Discussions focused principally on Spanish traditions and customs rather than whether or not some festivals are too dangerous and should be banned. Popular fiestas mentioned in response to the third question were *la Tomatina*, *San Fermín*, and *las Fallas*. It was good to hear students using personal experiences of trips to Spain to talk about other customs and regional gastronomy. It is important to remember that this sub-theme is solely based in Spain so examples from other Hispanic countries are not credited.

*Tarjeta F: El talento de Salvador Dalí*

This was one of the least popular cards, with few students managing to fully exploit the printed material. Those who attempted it appeared to find the information regarding Dalí's museum less accessible. There were some interesting discussions about other aspects of *el patrimonio cultural*, and Machu Picchu, the Alhambra, the Mezquita and the Sagrada Familia were the students' main places of interest.

*Tarjeta G: ¡La inmigración es indispensable para España!*

This was a popular card, with more able students recognising the focus on immigration in Spain as a demographic and economic need due to low birth rates and increased life expectancy. Many students, however, did not grasp this and therefore misinterpreted much of the printed material. The additional questions were often very general rather than focused on immigration in Hispanic countries. Some students did mention different types of immigration in Spain such as retired British citizens, who they felt do not contribute to Spanish society.

*Tarjeta H: La lucha contra el racismo en el deporte*

This was a very popular card, with many students engaging in interesting discussions on racism in the Hispanic world. The majority were aware of the incident with Dani Alves and also spoke about the *Todos somos macacos* campaign. Less able students struggled with the figures related to fines, and many students failed to mention the second bullet point or the idea of solidarity mentioned in the last bullet point. Students were able to give examples of racism in Hispanic countries, including the problems faced by gypsies and indigenous people.

*Tarjeta I: España, punto de encuentro de tres culturas*

Whilst not one of the most popular, this card was done very well by some students who demonstrated a very good knowledge of Spanish history and the ability to contrast what happened in the past with the current situation in Spain. However, in the majority of cases students lacked the knowledge and understanding to access the higher bands for this card. Gypsies were the most common example given in response to the third printed question.

*Tarjeta J: México, julio del 2018: Elecciones generales*

This was not a popular card, with very few students choosing it. Of those who did, many did not recognise the fact that the focus of the printed material was the situation in Mexico. The expression *no engancha* caused problems for some students. The issue of youth unemployment in Spain was frequently mentioned in response to the third printed question.

*Tarjeta K: Fidel Castro: 60 años de dictadura en Cuba*

This card was relatively popular. Clearly many students enjoy this aspect of the new specification, which is pleasing. More able students were able to discuss the divided opinions presented while the less able tended to focus solely on the positive opinions. Words such as *soberanía* and *pluralismo* caused problems for some. Students did have a good knowledge of other dictatorships such as those of Pinochet, Videla and Franco.

*Tarjeta L: Las madres de la Plaza de Mayo: 40 años de lucha*

This was a popular card with many students demonstrating prior knowledge of the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*. However, in some cases this led to them ignoring the printed information. Again, numbers were an issue for many students, and others were under the impression that Buenos Aires was a city in Spain and that either Franco or Pinochet were responsible for the disappearance of the children. The third and fourth bullet points were frequently misunderstood. However, most students were able to give appropriate examples of other popular movements ranging from *15M* and *la Revolución Pingüina* to *8M* and water protests in Peru.

**Individual Research Project****Titles**

Several topics were particularly popular such as Catalan independence, the rivalry between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid football teams *el clásico*, the changing role of women in Hispanic society, *la Tauromaquia* and Pablo Escobar. However, there were some quite unique titles that produced very interesting discussions on topics ranging from the Mirabal sisters and Juanita the Incan Mummy to the origins of sign language in Nicaragua and the exploitation of jungles in El Salvador.

Centres are reminded that there is an IRP Adviser for Spanish allocated to each centre who can be contacted at any time outside the 5-week window when tests are conducted, with regard to queries relating to the IRP and the appropriateness of titles. Centres are advised to contact the IRP adviser to seek approval of their titles. For contact details of the IRP adviser, centres should contact [mfl@aqg.org.uk](mailto:mfl@aqg.org.uk).

**Presentation**

Given that this is an aspect of the test that the student can prepare in advance, it is important that they do not over-prepare as this can lead to their delivery being unnecessarily complex, garbled and unintelligible. In the limited time available students should outline their key findings and develop them. Given that the presentation is marked solely for AO4 it is important that it contain an element of critical analysis rather than simply a list of factual information as the latter will have an adverse effect on the student's score.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that they should not interrupt the students during their 2 minute presentation.

**Discussion**

There were some very interesting and detailed discussions in which students were able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge and evaluation of their chosen topic, and it was clear that

students had undertaken extensive research. Good critical evaluation and appropriate use of relevant factual information to justify their opinions were key to enabling students to access the higher bands for AO4.

Whilst it is important the teacher-examiners use the information provided on the CRF when asking their questions, it is vital that they do not simply work through the list of bullet points without asking additional follow-up questions in response to the answers given by the student. Teacher-examiners need to create a genuine conversation and get students to clarify their comments where needed. In addition, teacher-examiners must not shy away from calling into question the validity of findings if required. Opportunities need to be given for the students to develop their responses and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the chosen topic. Questions that focus merely on factual information will not enable students to access the full range of marks for AO4 as it is the critical analysis and evaluation of the information that is being tested.

Teacher-examiners should also be aware that over-reliance on pre-rehearsed responses will have an adverse effect on the student's scores for AO1 and AO3.

Some students underestimated the amount of material needed to discuss their chosen topic in depth for 9 to 10 minutes. It is important that in the preparatory stages of their research they are aware of the need to do sufficient research on their chosen topic.

## **Student performance**

### **Presentation**

**Assessment Objective 4** Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken

In most cases students scored 3 or more for the presentation of their project. In many cases students simply stated why they had chosen the topic, how they had carried out their research and what aspects of it they would like to explore in the discussion, therefore conveying very little, if any, of their findings and giving no critical evaluation, thus limiting their score for this part of the examination. Similarly, presentations that contained purely factual information with no evaluation or analysis failed to access the higher bands. Centres are therefore strongly encouraged to ensure that students fully understand the requirements of this part of the examination.

### **Discussion**

**Assessment Objective 1** Understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face to face interaction

Scores for this AO varied considerably depending on the level of engagement in the discussion and the nature of the questions posed by the teacher-examiner. In tests where the teacher-examiner allowed the students to deliver rehearsed monologue style responses there was an adverse effect on the score for AO1. Those tests which saw students being required to engage in a genuine discussion about their chosen topic and regularly having to justify their opinions with appropriate evidence were rewarded with scores in the higher bands.

**Assessment Objective 3** Manipulate the language accurately, in spoken form, using a range of lexis and structure

Scores for this AO were generally in the upper three bands, with those students who demonstrated consistency in the manipulation of both basic and complex structures and used a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and idiom accessing top marks. Some students seem to confuse idiomatic phrases with idiom, and there is a tendency to over rely on the former, using these phrases inappropriately; this has an adverse effect on the score for AO3. Pronunciation and intonation were generally good, although students should ensure that they can correctly pronounce key words or names related to their topic.

**Assessment Objective 4** Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken

Scores for this AO varied considerably, with some students failing to access the upper bands due to the lack of critical and analytical responses given. Those students who scored in the top band were able to respond readily to questions that required them to evaluate their findings and used relevant information to justify the opinions they gave and the conclusions that they were drawing.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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