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GCSE

**SPANISH**

8698/SH: Speaking Higher  
Report on the Examination

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## General comments

The vast majority of students appeared to be entered at the correct tier, although there were instances of students scoring zero for the general conversation because they could not fulfil the criteria for the 1-2 band for Communication at Higher tier. These criteria are identical to the 7-8 band at Foundation.

Conduct of the tests by teacher-examiners was generally very good, but there were a number of issues which prevented students from achieving the mark they deserved. These are mentioned below in the relevant section of the test. Teacher-examiners should also see the advice sections at the end of this report and incorporate the advice given there into their own tests for future series, if there is anything in their own practice which needs to be addressed.

In the role-play and photo card sections, if a student gave a complete, although incorrect, answer to a question, the mark awarded was zero, even if the teacher-examiner then repeated the question and a correct answer ensued. As happened last year, some teacher-examiners kept asking the question again several times and this must have affected the confidence of the students concerned.

A copy of the Speaking Score Sheet used by examiners can be found at the back of the 2019 mark scheme. Centres are reminded that a breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test per student is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via eAQA.

## Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. Feedback is provided on the basis of need only and not for every teacher-examiner.

## Role-plays

Students generally did well on the role-play, sometimes when the other two sections of the exam were done less well. Most took note of the number of details they were asked to give and kept to that, which was good to see. Those students who said far more than they were asked to do risked losing clarity at some point in their response, which could adversely affect the mark.

Teacher-examiners should keep to the script of the role-play because failure to do so results in a student's response to a particular task being discounted. If students have prepared sufficiently well in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have notes which they can read from.

The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero marks per task.

Below are more detailed comments on each of the role-plays:

### Role-play 10

#### Task a

This was done well, with most students using the verbs *quiero* or *me gustaría* before the number of tickets required.

**Task b**

This was usually quite straightforward and most students asked the question *¿Hay descuentos para estudiantes?*

**Task c**

This two-part type of unpredictable task does not require verbs for the award of two marks. So here, *quince* and *inglés/inglesa*, for example, gained two marks. For that reason, the task was done well.

**Task d**

This was done well, with most students able to give an opinion and a reason, using a verb or verbs.

**Task e**

This was done quite well, when students realised that the task required the use of a past tense verb or verbs. When two details are required in this kind of task, it does not mean that two verbs are needed. So, for this task, two marks were achieved by students who said something like *Fui con mis padres* (first detail) *el año pasado* (second detail).

**Role-play 11****Task a**

Given the setting for this role-play, there were some strange responses, such as *compré el videojuego en Internet el año pasado*. However, these types of response were accepted because they were feasible answers according to the student's prompt on the card. The task created a lot of problems, especially with tense usage.

**Task b**

Not many students used comments such as *no funciona* or *está roto*, which is what had been expected. More unusual responses for taking back a video game, for instance *es aburrido*, were also credited.

**Task c**

Relatively few students asked for an exchange or a refund and the most common two-mark question was *¿Tiene(s) una solución?*

**Task d**

This was done well.

**Task e**

This was familiar ground for students and it was done well.

**Role-play 12****Task a**

The present tense was acceptable in this task and, as a result, it was done well, with most students using *es* with two positive adjectives of personality or description.

**Task b**

This was done well.

**Task c**

The main problem here was the pronunciation of *hijos*, which was sometimes so poor that no marks could be awarded, even though the rest of the question was correct. For those who pronounced *hijos* understandably, the most common correct questions were *¿Quieres hijos?* and *¿Tienes hijos?*

**Task d**

This unpredictable task caused considerable problems. This was especially so in the second of the two questions, where a significant number answered by saying either *el padre perfecto* or *la madre perfecta*.

**Task e**

There were some good responses to this task, such as *Tengo una familia grande y solo un aseo y una ducha y me fastidia*. However, it caused problems for some students who tried to say similar things, but whose language knowledge was lacking. More common two-mark answers were along the lines of *Es ruidoso y tienes que compartir un dormitorio*.

**Role-play 13****Task a**

It was quite common for students to score one mark for Communication for this task because of the difficulty in trying to find a second advantage. The most commonly given advantages were *es sano*, *es bueno para la salud* and *es fácil*.

**Task b**

This was done well. Students typically said what sports they were going to play.

**Task c**

This was done very well.

**Task d**

This was done well overall, with *es peligroso* being one of the most common responses. Some students confused *peligroso* with *perezoso*.

**Task e**

This was done well, with many students asking *¿Te gusta (el) alcohol?*

**Role-play 14****Task a**

This was done well by most students. The most common response was something like *Tengo buenas notas en español y malas notas en matemáticas*.

**Task b**

This was done well.

**Task c**

The first of the unpredictable questions was done well, but many students seemed not to understand *¿Cuánto tiempo dura ...?* in the second one.

**Task d**

This was done well by those students who could conjugate past tenses, although the most common verb used was *fui*. A good number of students were not awarded the marks for this task because they said *fue* instead of *fui*.

**Task e**

This task proved very challenging. Those who got two marks tended to ask a question such as *¿Hay (mucho) acoso escolar en México?*

**Role-play 15****Task a**

This was usually done well. Two marks could be given for a response such as *Voy a estudiar historia y geografía*, where each subject is one detail.

**Task b**

For those students who know *caro*, this was a straightforward task. However, many seemed not to know it and often struggled to say ‘It costs a lot of money’ in Spanish.

**Task c**

This was one of the unpredictable tasks where students were most successful.

**Task d**

This was done well.

**Task e**

Many students struggled in formulating a question for this task.

**Role-play 16****Task a**

This was done well. Some students said that they already had a reservation and said for how many people and at what time it was; others said they wanted to make a reservation. Both were accepted.

**Task b**

In task b, the prompt in the Teacher’s role was not a direct question; where the role-play was conducted as it should have been, students did well on this task, saying such things as *Quiero una mesa en la terraza*. If teachers gave an extra prompt by asking a question in place of the teacher script given in the Teacher’s Booklet, the student scored zero for this task. This is in line with the principles in the mark scheme and *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*.

As with all role-plays, if the student’s response is not what was expected, but could still be a valid response to what is written on the student card, they are given credit. Here, if the student did not answer, the teacher should have repeated the prompt in order for the student to then read what had been prepared from their notes and many teachers did this. Examples of teacher prompts like this have been used in both French and German role plays and there may be similar tasks in Spanish in future series.

Teachers are reminded that if they have questions about the confidential speaking test materials during their preparation for the tests, they must contact AQA by telephone (not by email) as

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outlined in the *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*, paragraph 4 on page 12 of the 2019 version of this document.

Task c

This was done well.

Task d

This was done well by those students whose pronunciation of *vegetariana* was clearly understandable. However, it often was not clear and a mark of one or zero had to be given, depending on how poor the pronunciation was.

Task e

As in Role-play 10 task e, this task was done well by those who recognised that the word *ayer* on the Candidate's Role meant that past tenses were required.

### Role-play 17

Task a

This task caused problems for many students who over-complicated the question. The most successful two-mark questions were simple questions such as *¿Qué excursiones hay en la región?*

Task b

The first of the two unpredictable questions in this task proved challenging, as students did not appear to understand the word *día*. For the second one, the vast majority gained two marks by giving a form of transport.

Task c

Where students recognised that this was a task that required the use of past tenses, they did well.

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

This was done well. By far the most common reasons were *hace sol* and *es bonita*.

### Role-play 18

Task a

This was done well. It is a good reflection on the teaching profession that most opinions were positive.

Task b

This was done well, but judging by their response, it seemed to be that a good number of students believed that *deberes* meant 'sport'.

Task c

Some students attempted to talk about a rule which required quite complex language, and were often unsuccessful. More straightforward responses tended to get two marks, including *Tengo (que llevar) uniforme*.

**Task d**

This proved to be a challenging task and a good number of students seemed not to understand the prompt on their card. Those who did understand it tended to use *voy a* with the infinitive of verbs like *estudiar*, *trabajar*, *repasar* and *hacer* (*los deberes*).

**Task e**

This was done well, with many students asking *¿Hay (mucho) estrés en el/tu colegio?*

**Photo cards**

It was clear that many centres had trained their students to talk about the photo and, in so doing, use several clauses. This is good practice, unless a student speaks for too long on the first question and runs out of time at the end of this section of the exam. When the fifth question cannot be asked before the three-minute point, it means that a mark in the top band cannot be awarded because all five questions must be answered clearly for that to happen. However, timing of the photo card was generally very good.

In order to score in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop three ('most') answers by using several clauses. There was no extra credit given in this question, which is marked for Communication only, for complex language. While accuracy and pronunciation are important factors, in order to achieve clarity, the range of language is not. It was in the first three, prepared, questions that students were able to develop their answers better because of the extra time they have to consider possible answers.

Teachers are allowed to paraphrase the questions in this part of the exam, but the same meaning must be maintained, or the student's answer is not credited. For example, the second question on Photo card K was *¿Qué piensas de la idea de escuchar música cuando estudias?* If a teacher paraphrased by asking *¿Cuál es tu opinión de escuchar música cuando estudias?*, this was fine. However, *¿Te gusta escuchar música cuando estudias?* was not allowed because it is not a paraphrase – it can be answered by *Sí* or *No*, which the aforementioned two questions cannot. In addition, extra words such as *en el futuro* or *actividades* cannot be added to the printed questions.

Questions discriminated well and there were some excellent answers, not only to the prepared questions, but sometimes to the unprepared questions as well. These were the questions which students found most challenging:

**Photo card J**

*¿Cómo sería tu boda ideal?*

Some students thought that *boda* meant 'partner'.

*¿Qué tipo de regalos te gusta recibir? ... ¿Por qué?*

A large number of students could not answer this question, presumably because they did not understand the word *regalos*.

**Photo card K**

*¿Qué piensas de la idea de escuchar música cuando estudias? ... ¿Por qué?*

The first part of the question was done well, but many struggled to give a clear reason. There were some good reasons, though: *No puedo concentrarme; es imposible trabajar si escucho música; es demasiado difícil hacer mis deberes.*



**Photo card L**

*¿Es una buena idea tener que pagar las bolsas de plástico en los supermercados? ... ¿Por qué (no)?*

Many students found it challenging to give a reason. There was a difference in the interpretation of the question. Some said it was a good idea because it helps to protect the environment and others said it was a bad idea for the same reason. Both were acceptable, the implication in the former being that charging meant that fewer bags were manufactured; in the latter, it was that it is a bad idea to have plastic bags at all.

**Photo card N**

*¿Cómo serán los colegios en el futuro?*

This question was widely misunderstood to mean 'What are you going to do in school in the future'. It was quite rare to find it answered correctly.

*¿Estás a favor o en contra de llevar uniforme? ... ¿Por qué?*

A lot of students did not understand *a favor* and/or *en contra*. However, many answered the question by saying what they thought of their own uniform and why, which was accepted.

**Photo card O**

*¿Qué vas a hacer para prepararte bien para los exámenes?*

Most students could answer this question, but often they were able to just name one thing and so any development was lacking.

*¿Crees que la educación es importante para tener un buen trabajo? ... ¿Por qué (no)?*

Many students found it impossible to give a clear reason, although there were some really good answers, such as: *Es necesario tener un título para ganar mucho dinero; es esencial ir a la universidad si quieres ser médico.*

**Photo card P**

*¿Sería mejor la vida sin redes sociales? ... ¿Por qué (no)?*

In the General conversation, many students were able to talk about the pros and cons of technology in general and of social media in particular. However, this question was not answered well.

**Photo card R**

*¿Qué problemas tienen las personas que no tienen trabajo?*

Many students were unable to give an answer to this question, although there were some good responses: *A veces no tienen casa y viven en la calle; no tienen dinero para comprar comida sana.*

**General conversation**

There seemed to be a greater incidence this year of conversations which were entirely pre-learnt and, in the worst cases, where all students were asked the same questions on the themes. Conversations which were entirely pre-learnt meant that the maximum mark for Spontaneity and fluency had to be three and very often there was also a negative impact on the other three

categories: for Pronunciation and intonation, because some of the pre-learnt answers lacked intonation and sometimes there was a lot of anglicised pronunciation; for Range and accuracy, because students had tried to learn answers which were too complex and many of the answers could not be recalled correctly; and for Communication, because the problems with pronunciation, intonation and grammatical accuracy sometimes prevented communication from taking place.

On the other hand, there were some conversations which were a delight to listen to, where the teacher-examiner followed up answers in an interested way. In order to score in the top band for Communication, the student ‘consistently develops responses in extended sequences of speech’. ‘Consistently’ does not mean ‘always’ and there the conversation works best when the extended sequences of speech are interspersed with more closed follow-up questions. There were some excellent examples of such conversations.

The required length of the general conversation is between five and seven minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of two and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher-examiner starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher-examiner asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher-examiner says ‘End of test’.

It is a requirement for students to ask an understandable question of the teacher-examiner. If this does not happen, there is a deduction of one mark for Communication. It is worth repeating what was said in last year’s report, that it is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, time may be up and it is therefore too late. In this part of the exam, a student can be credited with asking the question by saying *¿Y tú?* if it is asked appropriately. For example, when asked, *¿Adónde vas de vacaciones?*, the reply is *Voy a Francia. ¿Y tú?* However, if the teacher-examiner prompts a question by asking *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?*, merely to say *¿Y tú?*, it would not count as an appropriate question.

## Advice to teacher-examiners

### General

- Do a short test recording before the first student’s test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- The *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document is in the Secure Key Materials (SKM) area of e-AQA, available via the AQA website. If you do not have access to SKM, ask your examinations officer to download the document for you. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the *Instructions* document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student:

GCSE Spanish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number \_\_\_\_, candidate number \_\_\_\_, candidate name \_\_\_\_. Role-play number \_\_\_\_, photo card letter \_\_\_\_, general conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).

- Everything said by the teacher-examiner must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA.
- Use Spanish throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her role-play and photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the general conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible. It can be a good use of the Foreign Language Assistant's time, if you have one.

### **Role-play**

- Keep to the script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in an unprepared task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

### **Photo card**

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the three-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

### **General conversation**

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesante* or *aburrido* and there are other ways to say *me gusta*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *divertido*, *impresionante*, *maravilloso*, *estupendo*, *antipático*; and verbs such as *me encanta*, *me interesa*, *lo encuentro ...*, *odio*, *me molesta*.

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- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
  - Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
  - Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Do not ask all students identical questions.
  - In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
  - Announce the change of theme in Spanish: *Ahora vamos a pasar al tema número uno*, etc.
  - Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
  - The maximum length of the general conversation is seven minutes. Everything after that will not be marked.
  - Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they do not do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you do not forget to do it later on.
  - If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

### **Advice to students**

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three prepared questions on the photo card.
- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card and to all questions in the General conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words such as *¿cuándo?*, *¿cuántos?*, *¿dónde?*, *¿quién?*, *¿cómo?* and *¿qué?*
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Spanish. You can say *Repíteme*, *por favor* or *¿Cómo?*, for example.

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

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