GCSE

SPANISH

8698/RH: Reading Higher
Report on the Examination

8698
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General Comments

The average mark on this year's Higher Reading paper was 38.1 which was a pleasing improvement on last year. This year there were 37 marks for non-verbal answers compared to 24 marks in 2018 and 4 marks for answers in Spanish compared to 8 in 2018. This year, there were 10 marks for answers written in English compared to 19 in 2018. Teachers had entered their students for the correct tier and it was pleasing to see that exam technique is improving.

There were fewer cases of students leaving blank answers. As a general principle, students were given credit for all answers which conveyed the key idea intelligibly and without ambiguity whether the answer was in English or in Spanish. Marks were not awarded where errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar led to a failure to communicate the key ideas without ambiguity.

Students should be discouraged from giving alternative or additional information in their answers in Spanish or English as this may make the key idea ambiguous and the marks will not be awarded. In questions requiring non-verbal answers, students sometimes wrote the incorrect letters, for example in Question 8 some students wrote P+N as an answer. Students should be advised to make sure that they write the correct letters when answering these types of questions. They should also write their letters clearly as any ambiguous letters will be marked as incorrect. If students need to change an answer, they should cross out the incorrect letter and write the new letter clearly. It is advisable to use capital letters because they are less ambiguous than lower case letters.

Section A

Question 1

Students are very familiar with this question type and this subject matter is very topical. Students have a good understanding of this area of the specification. However, many students gave option C as an answer, having spotted 15 *años* in the text.

Question 2

Few students understood the verb *esperar*, and therefore did not score the mark for this question.

Question 3

This was an extended text. Compared to the question about the TV reality programme *Quiero ser monja* in 2018 students, performed better on this question which was very pleasing.

The most demanding part of the question was 3.2. When questions ask for the greatest concern, examiners are looking for a single answer. Therefore, those students who wrote out the list of parental concerns, identified by the questions in the text did not score because they had not identified the key idea from the many other ideas in the text. Only the most able students could correctly identify the use of the conditional tense in their answer.

Opinions are well understood and part 3.6 was well done with over 77 % of the cohort answering successfully which was pleasing.

Question 4

This was another extended text and was based on social issues.

On the whole, it was well done but 4.2 caused proved challenging with many students answering with option C which was what the other volunteers gave to the homeless, when the question asked what Mónica gave them.

Question 5

This was a new question style at Higher tier. Students do find the T, F, NM question style demanding and all but part 2 of this question was indeed challenging for many students. However, this question differentiated well.

Question 6

This was well done. Students are treating the literary text questions in just the same way as other questions and they no longer appear to have the perceived difficulty that was initially feared when the new specification began.

Question 7

This a well-known question style and students have been advised in previous reports that their answers need to include information from the questions in the questionnaire as well as from the circled answers.

This question is testing students' ability to show precision in their understanding. This year, students did not perform as well as in 2018.

In 7.1, many did not include the word **if** in their answers. **If** he won the lottery he would share the money with his family**.** In 7.2, students forgot to mention the bedroom so answers such as 'he never finds anything' were not sufficient to be awarded the mark. In 7.4, a large number of students did not understand the verb *intentar* so answers such as 'he intends to improve next time if he fails' were not awarded a mark.

Question 8

This question was testing tenses and it is pleasing that this year students did this better than in 2018, showing that they have practised this technique well in class and are familiar with the three time frames.

Question 9

This question tested the environment topic, a section that students traditionally find demanding. However, they performed really well on this question, especially in parts 1 and 3 which was pleasing.

Section B

In Section B, where question rubrics and answers are in Spanish, students performed better than last year, possibly because there were fewer questions that required written answers in Spanish.

Question 10

This was a literary text question testing opinions which proved very accessible to the majority of students.

10.2 was the best answered question on the whole paper, confirming that students are very good at identifying opinions.

Question 11

This item was testing 'Me, my family and friends' in the 'Identity and culture' theme and it was quite challenging. Students do find the gap fill question style demanding but they answered it more successfully than last year. In 2018, 3rd person preterite verbs were in the option boxes whereas this year singular masculine nouns were tested, so overall it turned out to be more accessible than in 2018.

Question 12

This question tested the environment topic in Spanish and parts 12.1 and 12.2 were really well done. Part 3 was the most demanding item on the whole paper. Many students did not recognise the noun *empleados* which was essential to identify the correct option in part 3. It is also possible that many students chose option C because they had not used that letter and students should be aware that not all letters are necessarily used**.**

Question 13

This task was testing Free time and although parts 2 and 3 were well done, a substantial number of students found the first sentence of the text to be a challenge and part 1 was not well done.

Question 14

This question required students to answer in Spanish and demonstrated understanding of specific details. Last year, there was a general tendency to include too much information in the answers and students were clearly nervous about missing out some information. However, this year students demonstrated improved exam technique by writing shorter answers. Students should write only the information necessary to convey the key idea. In accordance with the marking instructions, students were not penalised for spelling mistakes unless this led to an incorrect or ambiguous answer.

In 14.1, some students copied the words that came after *mucha* eg *mucha verdura* which was incorrect. Those who understood the word *poca* identified the correct answer but this did mean reading back from the word *mucha* and only the most able students did this. Students should be reminded that the correct answer can come after a key word in the question but it can also come before the key word as well.

In 14.2, a number of students copied the Spanish words that came after *no* in the question, eg, *No consigo perder peso*. Students were more successful in 14.3 although there were some odd spellings of *dormir*.

Students should be reminded that they are not required to change any of the Spanish words that they lift from the text. Any correct manipulations were awarded the mark but this is not a requirement at GCSE. Some changed *comida basura* to *comida rápida* for example, and were awarded a mark as it conveyed the same key idea.

There were some strange misspellings of the word *portátil.* In accordance with the mark scheme, credit was given for answers which show that the student has made a reasonable attempt at spelling the target language key word except where it becomes ambiguous. Marks were not

awarded to those students who copied whole chunks of text but these cases were fewer than in 2018. Students and teachers had clearly taken on board the advice in last year's report which had a positive impact on students' work in this exam.

Section C

Question 15

Students answered the translation well. Many understood the conditional tense in *te gustaría*, and only a few did not make this into a question. The word *sin* was not well known. A wide range of adjectives were accepted for *molestos* but not 'molesting'. The imperative *Piénsalo* was recognised by only the most able and since this part of the translation was aimed at the top grades, it differentiated very well. *Llenos de historia* proved challenging for many, resulting in some strange misunderstandings, for example, the words *el marisco sea* became 'The Marisco Sea', *deberías* became 'homework' and *gambas* became 'gambling'.

It was surprising how many students did not know the word *gambas* and students should be reminded that Key Stage 3 vocabulary maybe tested at Higher tier and they should revise some basic vocabulary in preparation for this exam. There is also a list of important verbs on pages 25 and 26 of the specification and students should know these. There were, however, some super translations and it was clear that students had practised this skill in class as there were very few unattempted or unfinished translations.

Advice to students

- Read the introduction to the question. This will help you to give appropriate answers.
- Make sure that your letters are clearly written when you are answering with a letter.
- Use the correct set of letters, eg, (P, N or P+N) (T,F, NM) or (P,N,F)
- Read forwards and backwards in a text from the key word in the question. Sometimes the answer comes after the key word and sometimes it comes before.
- Do not copy whole chunks of Spanish because you might include the wrong answer as well as the right answer and so you will not be score the mark.
- If you are asked to give one reason, only give one.
- In the questionnire type question, include information from the answer and the question in the questionnaire.
- Translate every word in the translation.

Advice to teachers

- Continue to bear in mind that the Higher Reading examination tests up to Grades 7, 8 and 9 and that 30 of the 60 available marks will test those grades.
- Train students to spot distractors and practise this in class.
- Draw attention to the list of important verbs in the specification and make sure your students are familiar with them.
- Encourage your students to use capital letters when answering with a letter and to make them legible even if they change their answer.

Use of statistics
Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA website.