
GCSE

SPANISH

8698/WF: Writing Foundation
Report on the Examination

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General comments

The exam discriminated well and the performance of students on each question covered the full range of marks. The quality of the work showed an overall improvement on last year, possibly because of decisions made by schools and colleges with regard to the tier of entry of those students who were borderline Foundation/Higher.

The vast majority of students were able to score marks on the first two questions, even if they struggled with the greater demands of Questions 3 and 4. On Question 4, the overlap question, there were some excellent responses from a number of students who exceeded the requirements of the assessment criteria, but these were the exception.

Question 1

Students had to write four sentences about the photo and each sentence was worth a maximum of two marks. If the verb was omitted, the maximum mark was one. The most successful answers tended to come from students who kept things simple, often by forming sentences which used the same verb, usually *hay* or *veo*, and keeping to items in the photo for which they knew the vocabulary. The main problems with regard to spelling were with *guitarra* and *móvil*.

Students must refer to what is in the photo, not what is not in it, as this scored zero marks. Also, as mentioned in last year's report, no marks are awarded for *La foto es en blanco y negro* nor for an opinion of the photo, such as *Me gusta la foto*. There was a good number of this type of answer.

Students were given credit if they imagined that they were in the photo and used the first person of the verb, for example: *Toco la guitarra*. However, use of the second person of the verb was awarded a mark of zero.

Advice to students

- Include a simple verb in each sentence.
- Keep each sentence short.
- Choose the items in the photo that you are most sure that you know the Spanish for.

Question 2

In this question there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of language. Students are required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points are compulsory and must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

Content

In order to score in the top band for Content, students had to give clear information in relation to all four bullet points. Giving information about teachers and uniform proved straightforward for the majority, but this was not that case for lunch time and homework. A significant number of students thought that *deberes* meant sports.

Students who exceeded the suggested number of 40 words often failed to score marks because some of the extra information contained incorrect language which made the intended messages unclear.

Quality of language

In order to score well for Quality of language, students had to show a variety of structures, but there is no requirement for complexity in this question. It is perfectly acceptable, and in fact advisable, to present information using the present tense. Using different verbs and adjectives when giving opinions was the main way in which students were able to vary the language they used.

Again, those students who wrote considerably more than the suggested 40 words usually made more errors and this was a contributory factor in the award of a lower mark.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly ten words per bullet point. If you write a little more on one and a little less on another, that is acceptable. However, try to keep to approximately 40 words in total.
- Mention all the of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them. If you miss out a bullet point entirely, you automatically lose two marks for Content.
- Tick off each bullet point on the question paper once you have covered it.

Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering Grades 1 to 5, the question differentiated well with nearly all students able to score some marks.

The sentences were divided into 12 key messages, as in the table below.

Conveying key messages

I send messages	<i>Mensajes</i> was well known, but often misspelt. The verb <i>mandar</i> was used more frequently than <i>enviar</i> , although many knew neither.
on my mobile.	This was done well, with the main problem being the spelling of <i>móvil</i> , which was often rendered by 'mobile'.
I want a (-) job	<i>Quiero</i> and <i>me gustaría</i> were both acceptable and the main problem was the use of <i>me gusta</i> .
(good) in the future.	This was done very well, probably because the use of <i>bien</i> in place of <i>bueno</i> was accepted.
I like	This was done better than any other key message.
to play basketball.	This was done quite well, with <i>juego</i> being accepted in place of <i>jugar</i> as it still communicated the message, albeit inaccurately. This was something that may have had a negative impact on the mark for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures.
I do	Few students used <i>hago</i> , although the message was conveyed by the use of <i>practico</i> or <i>juego</i> . Even so, it was not done well.
more sport	<i>Muy</i> and <i>mucho</i> were commonly used in place of <i>más</i> , but neither was accepted as they do not convey the same message.
in the summer.	This was done quite well, although the spelling of <i>verano</i> , which was

	often a mixture of <i>verano</i> and <i>invierno</i> , was regularly too poor to be accepted.
We went	<i>Fuimos</i> was often rendered by <i>fuemos</i> , which was allowed, as it was considered to be a spelling error which did not affect communication; and <i>fui</i> , which was not accepted.
to a concert	<i>Concerto</i> was accepted as a misspelling of <i>concierto</i> and so this was done quite well. However, <i>a</i> was often not known and this meant the message was not conveyed accurately enough.
in the bullring.	Relatively very few students knew <i>plaza de toros</i> . Because all key messages had to be conveyed in order for a mark of 5 to be given, very few students got the top mark.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There was usually a direct correlation between the mark for Key messages and the mark for Application of grammar. However, this was sometimes lower, if the student had been allowed several key messages in spite of poor grammar and/or spelling; or higher, if the mark for Key messages has been lowered by several relatively minor errors.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases.
- Check carefully that you do not miss out any parts of the translation by accident.
- If you are not sure how to translate something, have a go as it may score you a mark. Leaving it blank will not.
- Check verb tenses and endings.

Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

Students were able to achieve full marks by writing in the region of 90 words. Many did this, but others lost marks for Content because they wrote around half that amount. Others wrote too much and made more errors in so doing. This affected the mark for Quality of language and also the mark for Content, when the language became unclear.

At this tier, it was usually the students who wrote concisely and accurately who scored the highest marks.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is not possible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no difficulty in developing ideas and

expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’ in the criteria) and this had an impact on marks awarded. Therefore, students who conveyed information in relation to all four bullet points did not necessarily score a mark of 9 or 10 if there were lapses in clarity.

Question 4.1

This was by far the most popular option between the two questions available. The first bullet point, about last year’s holiday, was familiar territory for the majority and they were able to convey something in relation to the holiday. Some wrote at length and sometimes lost clarity from time to time. The task was understood and grammatical errors occurred mainly from poor tense usage.

The second bullet point, asking whether the student prefers to go on holiday with friends or family and why, was also done well, although a good number failed to convey the message because they began with *prefieres*, rather than *prefiero*. The response to the third bullet point, about the student’s next birthday, was very mixed. However, when it was understood, many were able to write accurately using the immediate future. It was the fourth bullet point that posed the most problems. It was quite rare for the correct message to be conveyed, apparently because the verb *ayudar* was not known. This resulted in students writing about what they liked to do in their free time. When this bullet point was not successful, it meant that the maximum mark for Content was 6.

Question 4.2

Far fewer students did this question than 4.1. The first bullet point was not done well, sometimes because of problems with the formation of past tenses, and sometimes because the verb *ganar* was not understood, often being confused with *gastar*. The second bullet, about part-time jobs, was sometimes not accomplished because *los trabajos a tiempo parcial* was written differently. For example, some students wrote things like *Me gustan los parcial*, which was meaningless and was not credited. The third task was generally done well and any activity which requires money to be spent was accepted. The last bullet point was done well and, as was the case in 4.1, the immediate future was used confidently by many. The intention was that students would write about their study plans for September, but any clearly conveyed plan was credited.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy.

Each of the bullet points for both questions required students to use a variety of vocabulary because of the different nature of each task. Each one allowed students to choose language which they could use confidently.

In order to score in the top band for Quality of language, there had to be successful reference to events in the present, past and future. One task in each of 4.1 and 4.2 required the use of a past and a future tense. As previously mentioned, there was a lot of successful usage of the immediate future. However, at this tier, references to the past were less successful, especially in 4.2, where it was difficult to convey the message *qué hiciste recientemente para ganar dinero* by using *fui*.

Complexity at this tier was achieved in various ways: infinitive constructions; subordinate clauses; the use of longer sentences formed using connectives; comparatives; negatives; the use of *lo* with

an adjective; the present subjunctive in phrases such as *cuando sea mayor*. At this level, the subjunctive is probably being used in the form of a set phrase, but it still added complexity to the writing.

The other strand in Quality of language is the accuracy of the writing. The more common, major errors were with verbs, either with the wrong person or the wrong tense of the verb. Poor tense formation, particularly of the preterite tense, was also an issue. Over the two questions, four of the bullet points contained the possessive adjectives *tu* or *tus*. If this was repeated in the student's answer, the bullet point could not be credited. At this tier there were a high number of minor errors, which cumulatively contributed to a lower mark for Quality of language. Sometimes poor spelling also had an effect, even when the word was given in the prompt, such as *cumpleaños*.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words.
- Mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them.
- Tick off the bullet points on the question paper once they have been covered.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- Make sure you include opinions as required by the task.
- In some cases, the language of the bullet points can be used as part of your response. For example, in Question 4.2, the first bullet point is: *qué hiciste recientemente para ganar dinero*.
- You are given an ideal start to a sentence: *Recientemente, para ganar dinero,...* If you do this, make sure the spelling is accurate.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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