AQA

GCSE
SPANISH
8698/WH: Writing Higher
Report on the Examination

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General comments

There was some excellent work from the more able students at this tier. They showed accuracy, precision, complexity of language and dealt with some quite challenging themes in Question 2, which was the question that discriminated best. There were students, however, whose quality of written Spanish was poor and this was reflected in all three questions attempted. The suggested number of words for Question 1 is 90 and for Question 2, 150. When students far exceeded the suggested word count, they very often made significantly more errors, which had an impact on the marks for language.

Question 1

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. The quality of answers was obviously better at this tier than at Foundation tier and a good proportion of students scored full marks. For both questions, there was a requirement to refer to events in the past, present and future and the vast majority were able to do this successfully.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Occasionally a bullet point seemed to be misunderstood and therefore four marks were not scored for Content. In order to score 7 marks or more for Content, information in relation to all four bullet points must be conveyed. Lapses in accuracy which had a bearing on communication could also contribute to a lower mark for Content.

Question 1.1

As with Foundation Question 4.1, this was by far the more popular of the two questions and it was done very well overall. There were students who, on the first bullet point, exceeded the suggested word count for the whole question. Whereas at times the account of a past holiday was given very clearly, using really good language, there were other times where the inaccuracy of the writing had a negative impact on the Content mark, as well as on the mark for Quality of language. The second bullet point was done very well indeed, as was the third bullet point, where the most able students were able to give interesting, at times imaginative, descriptions of their plans for their next birthday. The fourth bullet point was the least well done of the four, because some students did not pick up on the verb *ayudar*, but there were some impressive accounts of how students help others. There was a lot of evidence here that there has been good teaching of the topics of poverty and homelessness and of charity and voluntary work.

Question 1.2

Although only a relatively small number of students did this question, the overall marks were slightly better than those for Question 1.1. Each of the bullet points produced generally good responses, although, as at Foundation tier, some confused *ganar* with *gastar* in the first bullet point.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. In relation to the first three elements, the following were

seen: successful references to two or three time frames; different persons of the verb; synonyms, especially when giving opinions: *me gusta, me encanta, me chifla, me flipa*; *me* mola; structures reflecting complexity were often successfully attempted, for example: infinitive constructions, adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and even subjunctives.

Occasionally, students would not fulfil a bullet point because they kept the possessive adjective *tu* or *tus* from the prompt, and so the bullet point was not conveyed. As far as time frames were concerned, the more common problem was when students attempted to refer to a past event and sometimes used the present tense to do so or the verb was conjugated incorrectly.

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.

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students write approximately 150 words in total about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. Students had a lot to say about each of the bullet points for whichever question they chose.

The quality of work varied enormously. The best far exceeded the requirements for full marks, whereas the inaccuracy of some Spanish made comprehension difficult. It was noticeable this year that students picked up on the open-ended nature of the tasks, but also ensured that what they wrote was relevant to the question.

Content

Very often, responses were of 300 words or even more. Unfortunately for many of those students, the inaccuracy of their language had a detrimental effect on the mark for Communication as well as on the language marks. In a lot of cases, a response of around the suggested number of words would in all probability have attracted a higher mark.

Question 2.1

For the first bullet point, students had to give at least one advantage and one disadvantage of technology and they had lots of ideas about the topic area. Many admitted their own addiction to their mobile phone and to social networks and used the first person angle successfully. At the same time, there was ample scope for mention of all the huge benefits that technology brings and this was also done well by many. However, sometimes students tried to be over ambitious given their own linguistic competence and this caused serious problems with communication.

The second bullet point was also tackled well by many and students wrote about lots of activities that would make them happy in the future, showing just how successful these open-ended tasks can be.

Question 2.2

The first bullet point gave students the opportunity to write about past fun experiences they had had and again there was an extremely wide variety of activities they had done. Those who could handle past tenses confidently did very well, whereas there was a lack of clarity in the accounts of those who could not.

For the second bullet, possibly the majority included addiction to technology as one of the problems faced by the young. Other common problems were drugs, alcohol and stress of study because of pressure from teachers and parents. There was a great choice of things to write about.

Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. It is worth noting that reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but the use of these would be considered to be attempts at complexity. In terms of variety of language, many students were able to produce a good range of connectives: *porque*, *ya que*, *dado que*, *así que*.

Many students extended their sentences and added to the complexity of the language by using subordinate clauses introduced by words such as *que*, *cuando* and *donde*. Infinitive constructions were used confidently by most students, although there were those who found them difficult and would, for example, follow *gustar* with a conjugated verb.

Successful use of object pronouns was less common, but they added precision to the writing when they were used well. Although only two time frames were targeted in each of the questions, many students used a wide range of tenses as they developed their response. There were also examples of good use of the subjunctive.

Accuracy

In order to score two marks for Accuracy, the writing must be 'more accurate than inaccurate'. A good number of students scored this mark because the language was only just worthy of that criterion and so could not be a higher one. The criteria refer to verb and tense formations and how correct these are. Although there was some excellent work as far as verb usage was concerned, there were also examples of very poor usage, even at this tier. This tended to be worse in Question 2.1 than 2.2. Where students' use of verbs is poor, there will be a detrimental effect in all areas of the criteria.

There are also references in the criteria to major and minor errors. A major error is one that impairs communication, whereas a minor error does not have a bearing on communication, such as incorrect adjectival agreement or gender. Major errors often occurred when students tried to write things which were grammatically too complex for them. This was especially true of the first bullet point in Question 2.1 and the second in 2.2.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required.

- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response.

- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.

- If you have time at the end of the exam, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.

- Try not to say things that are really difficult or for which you do not know the vocabulary. It is better to be simple and clear than complex and unclear.

Question 3

For this question, there are 6 marks for Conveying key messages and 6 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with the vast majority of students able to score some marks. There were a good number of excellent translations which were error free.

The passage was divided into 13 key messages, as in the table below.

Conveying key messages

I like school because	This was done very well.
my subjects are interesting and	This was done very well, with the main problem being not knowing the word *asignaturas*. Some students got around this by using *clases*.
I get on well with my teachers.	*Me llevo bien* was well known on the whole.
We studied	This was done well, although *estudié* was not uncommon.
the environment	This was done well, despite anglicised guesses by some.
in Geography yesterday and now	*Geografía* was sometimes spelt with 'ph' in the middle and this was not accepted. Other than that, this was done well.
I am going to recycle more.	The main problem here was with the spelling of *reciclar*, which was sometimes too far away from the Spanish to be accepted.
Today	*Hoy* was generally well known, but *todo* and *toda* appeared quite frequently.
we watched	*Vimos* was the most common correct answer here, although *miramos* was also accepted, as was the perfect tense of either verb.
a film about	This was well done.
a festival in Valencia.	This was very well done.
It is a city that	This was done well, although some failed with this message

	because they omitted *que*.
I would like to visit.	Very well done.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

If one of the key messages contained a minor error or errors, it was still credited, for example, *proffessores*; *cuidad*. However, an accumulation of such errors had an overall effect on accuracy which could be reflected in the mark for Application of grammar. Nevertheless, there was usually a direct correlation between the two marks.

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.

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.