
GCSE

SPANISH

8698/WH Writing Higher tier
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There were big differences in the quality of work, but overall students coped well with the demands of the examination. Most students were able to score highly on Question 1 and it tended to be Questions 2 and 3 that discriminated more clearly. More able students applied their linguistic knowledge effectively in responding to unexpected tasks and could use a wide range of structures and vocabulary in so doing. Inaccurate language often made comprehension difficult or impossible and this had a negative impact not only on the marks for language, but also for the mark for Content. The recommended number of words to write for Question 1 is 90 and, for Question 2, 150. When students far exceeded the recommendation, 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 standard of work at this tier was generally very good and students were able to score highly. 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 lost 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

This was by far the more popular choice for students and it was done well on the whole. Some students misinterpreted the second bullet point and wrote in the present tense about excursions available in the region. The third bullet point was sometimes not accomplished because students mentioned what the environment was like in their area, but they did not say what they did to protect it. The first and last bullet points were done well. Many wrote a lot in reply to the first bullet point, giving their likes and dislikes, even though the bullet point was fulfilled if only likes or dislikes were mentioned (*qué te gusta* o *no te gusta de tu pueblo*).

Question 1.2

As at Foundation tier, students in the first bullet point sometimes incorrectly interpreted *fiesta* to mean a festival, when the rubric had made it clear that it was a party. In addition, some students did not pick up on the fact that this was a task which elicited reference to a past event. The present tense was acceptable in the second bullet point, with such comments as *Mi novio perfecto es guapo e inteligente*. However, many used the conditional tense equally effectively. The vast majority successfully conveyed information in relation to the third bullet point, even if their opinion on marriage was very simplistic, for example *Me gusta el matrimonio*. For the last bullet point, students were well able to write about their plans for the future.

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 was 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*; structures reflecting complexity were often successfully attempted, for example: infinitive constructions, adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and even subjunctives. Less successful language included some confusion of tenses and verb endings; problems with the possessive pronoun, when *tu* in the prompt was retained in the response: *En tu región ...*; *me gusta* used to convey *me gustaría*. As far as tenses 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.

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 1.1, the third bullet point is: *qué haces para proteger el medio ambiente*. You are given an ideal start to a sentence: *Para proteger el medio ambiente...* 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. A very similar number of students opted for each question. The quality of the work was mixed. Whereas many students were able to write fluently in response to the bullet points, using language that was largely accurate and varied, there were some who found great difficulty in addressing the more open-ended tasks. Students needed to write things that were relevant to the bullet points. Often this was not the case, especially in the response to the first bullet point of each question. Where students exceeded the recommended word count significantly, there were usually more errors, which did have a negative impact on the language marks in many cases.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of the bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students had lots to say in response to each of the two bullet points in each question and were able to develop their answers, giving and justifying opinions. The main problem was that some students made serious errors to a greater or lesser degree and these regularly had a major impact on the amount of information that was successfully conveyed.

Question 2.1

Many students saw the first bullet point as an opportunity to write pre-learnt information referring to a good holiday and inserted into it problems that they had had at some point during that holiday. This was acceptable, but it was noticeable that the quality of language was often better in the references to the good parts of the holiday as opposed to the problems. There needed to be more than one problem for the bullet point to be accomplished (*problemas*, not *problema*). It was not uncommon for students to mention only one problem. The most popular festivals in the second bullet point were *La Tomatina*, *San Fermín* and *El Día de los Muertos*. Although the latter is associated more with Mexico than with Spain, it was perfectly acceptable to refer to it in this question. It was also allowed for students to write about the festival as one that they had attended in the past. The implication was that they had enjoyed it before and would like to go again. Most, however, described the festival using the present tense and it was impressive how well the best students could describe what happens in their chosen festival.

Question 2.2

A good number of students wrote quite a lot of irrelevant material in addressing the first bullet point about a memorable day at school. They wrote in the present tense about their opinion of different aspects of their school before they mentioned the memorable day. As with Question 2.1, it appeared that they were reproducing pre-learnt material. If there was no reference at all to the memorable day, the maximum mark for Content was 12. However, there were some really imaginative responses to this bullet point by students who seemed to enjoy describing the memorable day. When tackling the second bullet point, recommending things to do in your free time, most students wrote about what they did and why they liked it so much. This was an acceptable thing to do and was done well. When the language used was inaccurate, there was an impact on marks awarded for Content as well as for language.

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. 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. 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.

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.

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

Conveying key messages

Last Saturday	Most knew <i>el sábado pasado</i> and <i>el último sábado</i> was also accepted.
I did my homework	<i>Hice</i> caused a problem for many and it was common to see <i>hacé</i> or <i>hací</i> .
in the morning	This was done very well. <i>En</i> was accepted as well as <i>por</i> .
and then I caught the bus	<i>Cogí</i> or <i>tomé</i> was done badly. A good number of students did not render the word ‘then’, even though there were several possibilities, such as <i>luego</i> , <i>entonces</i> , <i>después</i> .
and went to the town centre	The message was sometimes not conveyed because ‘the town centre’ was translated as <i>el centro comercial</i> .
I like to have lunch	<i>Almorzar</i> , <i>comer</i> , <i>tomar la comida</i> were some of the acceptable ways to translate ‘to have lunch’. This was done well.
with my friend in a restaurant	This was done very well.
next to	<i>Al lado de</i> was sometimes not known, although <i>cerca de</i> was accepted. <i>Delante/detrás de</i> were quite common and they were not accepted.
the charity shop	The majority did not know <i>la tienda solidaria</i> or <i>la tienda con fines benéficos</i> . <i>La tienda de caridad</i> was accepted, as were explanations of what a charity shop is, such as <i>la tienda que ayuda a los demás</i> .
where she works	The third person of the verb often caused problems.
Later, we bought	This was done well, although <i>compremos</i> was common.
tickets for a concert	<i>Entradas</i> , <i>billetes</i> , <i>tíquets</i> and <i>tickets</i> were all accepted and so this was done very well.

that we are going to see in July	This was done well and students seem to be very confident when they are asked to use the immediate future.
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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, *a lado de; concierto*. 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.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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