



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE SPANISH
AS**

SUMMER 2018

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The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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WJEC EDUQAS AS SPANISH

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COMPONENT 1: SPEAKING

There was a marked improvement in the Speaking examinations this year compared to last year. On average, candidates scored five more marks than last year's cohort and it was particularly pleasing to see that centres had taken on board the advice given in the examiner's report. Candidates were generally better prepared and able to access the full mark scheme.

AO1

Good candidates showed lively levels of interaction. Candidate questions for the examiner were more relevant and focused on the target culture (see AO4 below) rather than reverting to unrelated personal experience. Fluency was at times interrupted by relatively long pauses, but most candidates maintained satisfactory communication and fluency at AS Level. Examiners made a conscientious effort to give candidates opportunities to utter spontaneous responses, enabling them to access the top band of this assessment criterion.

AO2

Many centres had trained their students well to refer to the stimulus text on the cards and use this information during the conversation. This was often successful and raised candidates' scores at AO2. However, some candidates used these comments almost mechanically, regardless of the examiner's question at that point of the discussion. In order to successfully show understanding of written text, candidates need to comment on the written stimulus when pertinent.

AO3

Levels of language accuracy varied throughout this year's entry. Many candidates showed a clear knowledge of the most common irregular verbs and used them accurately in different tenses. Verbs like "decir", "hacer" and "tener" proved problematic in the preterite tense. The most successful candidates managed to incorporate idiom successfully whilst attempting more complex grammar structures where appropriate. A few candidates had been trained to use imperfect subjunctive structures with "si" clauses which were seldom appropriate, often too forceful to sound natural or simply irrelevant (i.e. si yo fuera un toro no me gustaría la corrida"). There were many candidates who possessed good pronunciation and successfully steered away from English intonation, producing more authentic and clearer speech, enabling them to access a higher mark.

AO4

Candidates showed a more robust knowledge of Spanish speaking culture. There were less instances of personal experience unrelated to the Spanish speaking countries. Successful candidates incorporated their cultural knowledge appropriately into their answers in order to prove a point or illustrate an argument. Some candidates reached top marks by addressing certain controversial issues critically, sensibly and with an open mind, showing both understanding and respect for Spanish speaking culture.

Overall, teachers seem to have implemented strategies that have improved the performance of this year's cohort. Successful candidates at AS Level will certainly stand in good stead to succeed at A Level next year.

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COMPONENT 2: LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION

In general, the exam was fair and a good test of candidates' knowledge of Spanish. It was accessible to the majority but also tested the ablest candidates.

General observations from examiners were that handwriting is extremely poor among too many candidates causing genuine legibility issues at times, adjectival agreement is almost non-existent and candidates have real problems with the use of the definite articles in both English and Spanish. It is recommended that this should be addressed in the classroom. However, on a positive note, many candidates showed a wide range of skills and an impressive understanding of both written and spoken Spanish.

SECTION A - Listening

Question 1

The first listening task on training young Spaniards to work on the archaeological heritage of Avila was one of the most accessible in the examination. The question that caused most problems was (g) where some candidates thought that the training was in the field of Geography instead of Archaeology. Most candidates succeeded in getting between 4 and 7 marks. The advice to candidates in this type of true / false / correction task is to aim for short, straightforward answers. If candidates find themselves writing beyond the dotted line, they are probably writing too much information, which may be contradictory or confusing. Candidates who wrote lengthy answers at times self-penalised through writing poor Spanish that did not show that they had understood the recording.

Question 2(A)

Questions 2(A) and 2(B) were on a text on the changing nature of families in Spain. Candidates cannot rely on guesswork or grammar alone to complete this type of pairing task in 2(A) but, unfortunately, some did. The sentences that caused most difficulty were (c) and (k).

Question 2(B)

This task proved very accessible to candidates and was well done. However, there was evidence that some candidates were choosing from the list of words at random. For example, in (3) some opted for *ahogados por* and in (4) for *repostar* or *engullir* when these were highly unlikely to be correct.

Question 3(A)

Questions 3(A) and 3(B) were on an interview with a young Spanish actress, Diana Gómez. Candidates were advised that 3(A) was a summary question and that full sentences were not required. This summary task proved to be a good discriminator. In the first bullet point, a fair number confused the age of 16 with 17, 60 and 70. The second bullet point proved to be very challenging and only the best candidates were able to state clearly what the actress liked about working in the theatre, on television and in films. In the third bullet point, the detail about Spanish cinema being dependent on government funding was not widely understood.

Many candidates do not understand what a summary task entails. The instruction to give one or more details means exactly what it says. Therefore, if they find themselves trying to transcribe a paragraph of information, they are not fulfilling the task, which is essentially to show the ability to write a short answer to the question asked.

Question 3(B)

The task asking comprehension questions about the interview was not as challenging as the summary question above. However, some candidates did not seem to grasp the idea that their answers should be short and direct. Too many resorted to trying to write down what the recording said with very mixed results. For example, question (d) on why the film *Ocho apellidos vascos* had been a big success elicited two or three sentences from some candidates when all that was required was the straightforward *por su ambiente auténtico*. It is worth pointing out that in answers to comprehension questions many candidates translate directly from English 'because of' into *porque de* when the simple *por* is the correct Spanish.

SECTION B – Reading

Question 4(A)

The literary text on a visit to Machu Picchu proved accessible to candidates and most scored between 3 and 5 marks.

Question 4(B)

Some candidates found the search for synonyms in the above text relatively easy but others had difficulty in accessing full marks. Synonyms (c) and (e) were particularly problematic. Students need to be encouraged to work on identifying word classes when dealing with written texts. This can be practised regularly when studying any of the themes and sub-themes in the classroom.

Question 5

This gap-filling task on the text on trends, habits and tastes of young people in Madrid was not as well done as a similar text on the *Tomatina* fiesta last year. It is advisable for teachers to encourage students to read the whole text through rather than just focusing on the gaps and the list of words. It is also worth teaching candidates that they cannot rely on grammatical clues and need to think of the correct meanings. The gaps that caused most problems were 1, 4, 6 and 9.

Question 6(A)

Questions 6(A) and (B) were on the iconic Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo. Question 6(A) was a comprehension task and was generally well done. The only questions that caused difficulties were (b) and (d).

Question 6(B)

The comprehension task in this question was multiple-choice. While there was some evidence of guesswork, it was well done by candidates. Most errors were in question 4 where many opted for (a) or (c) which made some sense but the evidence from the text pointed to (b), Frida's inability to become a mother.

Question 7

It was pleasing to see many candidates coping well with the translation into English. However, there is still room for improvement. For example, the two different meanings of *ya* in *España ya es el país* ('Spain is now the country') and *La separación ya no* ('Separation is no longer') were not generally understood. Some candidates failed to distinguish between the European Union and Europe, and others made heavy weather of *rupturas matrimoniales* where 'marriage brakes' [sic] was a common translation.

Question 8

The mark scheme ensured that all candidates were able to access at least some marks but this task was not as well done as the translation into English. Teachers should warn candidates to beware of making up words from English, for example, *trendas* for 'trends' (the correct word was in the title of question 5), *identicales* for 'identical', *atractan* for *atraen*, *concernados* for 'concerned' and *accessan* for *acceden*.

The following words or phrases also caused widespread problems: 'almost', 'no young Spaniard' (*no joven espanol [sic]* and *nadie joven espanol [sic]*) were too common, 'mobile phone' (*mobile* and *movile* were frequent), and 'increasingly' (many made up an adverb such as *incrementamente / crecientamente*). In order to improve candidates also need to bear in mind the importance of common genders and adjectival agreements, for example, some wrote *las padres* for *los padres* ('parents') and 'young Spaniards' were translated too often as *las jóvenes españoles* or *los jóvenes españolas*. This task remained the main discriminator in the exam.

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COMPONENT 3: CRITICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

Candidates coped well with the essay-writing component again this year. Questions were addressed with pleasing levels of success. There is no significant difference in performance at the top of the grading scale, whereas the B to E range scored slightly less marks than last year's cohort.

AO3

The best candidates applied grammar rules accurately and they used a wide range of idiom and specific vocabulary. Successful attempts were also made on more complex structures like the present subjunctive and relative clauses, showing ambition and, at times, sophistication and flair.

There were certain areas where some candidates struggled. Irregular conjugations of key verbs such as *haber*, *tener*, *dar*, *decir*, *saber* and *hacer* were problematic and had an adverse impact on clarity. Occasionally, candidates were confused as to what tense to use resulting in a mismatch of tenses, particularly when it came to analyse concepts and develop ideas where the present tense may be the most effective tense to use. Other areas of improvement include personal "a" and other common prepositions following certain verbs, e.g. *ayudar a*. Agreement at AS Level is always a challenge, particularly with less obvious words like *personaje*, *problema*, *parte*, etc. Wrongly learnt or made up expressions also appeared occasionally (*por qué de*, *facto*, *ser exita*, *lealidad*, *resiliente*, etc). This unfortunately had an adverse effect on clarity. "Ser" was used with continuous tenses and "estar" appeared in descriptions where "ser" should have been used. There was some confusion with the use of "se" to construct passive reflexive sentences.

AO4

There were a good number of essays where candidates made good use of contextual information. The best essays were concise, addressed the question without deviation and stayed within the recommended number of words. Many candidates showed good powers of critical analysis and offered witty interpretations of the points challenged by the essay questions.

In order to improve candidate performance in AO4, they should avoid mechanical, wasteful, and long-winded introductions where candidates set out what they are going to do by repeating the essay question. Contrived use of complex structures alongside some personal inappropriate appreciation results in shallow analysis, which does not contribute to a high mark in AO4 (e.g. *Si yo fuera María, no trafficaría con drogas*). Finally, misquoting can also detract from an otherwise convincing performance.

Overall, most candidates showed high levels of enthusiasm and resilience. They seemed to have enjoyed the study of film or literature and the lessons learnt at AS will undoubtedly improve candidate chances of achieving a high grade at A Level.



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