



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SPANISH
AS**

SUMMER 2019

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COMPONENT 1

General Comments

Candidates coped very well yet again with the wide range of stimuli provided on both cards. This year, centres have clearly focused on training candidates to show culture knowledge and understanding, enabling them to achieve higher marks on AO4. Candidate performance on Card B was particularly pleasing.

Comments on individual questions/sections

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Many candidates showed excellent levels of interaction (AO1), but there were instances where their questions to the examiner lacked relevance. Centres may train their candidates to avoid simplistic questioning such as “¿Te gustan las fiestas?” and practice higher level questioning such as “¿Crees que promover las fiestas es una solución para reducir el desempleo en [Spanish-speaking country] ?

A large number of candidates showed excellent understanding of the written Spanish (AO2) by referring to the text in the box swiftly and using this information to support their views. This is a skill that is worth practicing to score high on this criterion.

Accuracy, range and pronunciation / intonation (AO3) varied throughout the entry. Problems occurred mostly with verb endings and prepositions, but most candidates coped well and showed a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary (quizlet and memrise are very effective digital tools for vocabulary learning) and some creditable attempts to sound authentic.

Whilst performance on Card B was better than last year, there are still some areas where candidates may improve their AO4 score in Card A. Some candidates who tended to be too general could have shown more culture specific knowledge in some topics such as Youth Trends, Education and Relationships. Some candidates had a tendency to refer to their own personal experience in the UK instead of discussing these topics in a Spanish-speaking country context. Fact sheets could be used by teachers to encourage candidates (including native speakers) to keep their discussion relevant to AO4.

Summary of key points

In order to further improve success rates, teachers should target individually the four AOs as outlined above.

The structured use of Foreign Language Assistants (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/employ-language-assistant>) for weekly conversation practice has proven very successful, as well as opportunities to put candidates' speaking skills at work in study trips, as well as exchanges, collaborative projects and other partnerships (e.g. Erasmus +).

SPANISH
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COMPONENT 2

General Comments

This Paper overall allowed most candidates to perform to the best of their ability and, as seen in previous examinations, the main discriminating tasks were the summary question, and the two translation tasks. It is disappointing to see numbers falling year on year, yet this qualification equips candidates with useful life and professional skills.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The listening tasks were well within the capabilities of most candidates. Question 1 on the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, elicited marks from 0 – 6, with most candidates gaining some marks. However, there is evidence that some candidates were matching the pairs via the plausibility of the completed sentence without paying attention to the short transcript. In Question 1, 5 was found the most difficult. It is worth pointing out that in (g) many candidates could not write *diecinueve* correctly and some managed to find a spelling that was unrecognisable as ‘nineteen’ in Spanish. Since this was a comprehension question, it would have been sufficient to write ‘19’.

In Question 2(A) the more difficult statements were (a) and, surprisingly, (d). In (a) too many expected the first statement to be ‘true’ or failed to understand the importance Luis Fonsi attributed to his experience. In (d) some thought that Erika Ender’s input into *Despacito* was irrelevant. In Question 2(B), most candidates were able to access some marks, and the most testing gap fillings were 2 and 3.

Question 3(A) was a summary task yet some candidates disregarded the rubric, and persisted in writing in full sentences. They were only penalised if their answer was contradictory, which was sometimes the case. However, the transcript allowed good candidate accessibility to the marks. Candidates could improve the clarity of their answers by understanding the basic usage of *por* and *para*. There is widespread misunderstanding of the basic differences between the two prepositions. I wish to emphasise that I am NOT talking here about the more advanced differences between *por* and *para* but, for example, just practising and remembering that *por* can mean ‘because of’ / ‘on account of the fact that’ can stop candidates using the ubiquitous but meaningless *porque de*. This error is found throughout the three AS, as well as A level, components.

Question 3 (B) contained comprehension questions in Spanish on the second part of the transcript targeted in Q. 3(B). The first question (a) could be answered in three words: *por la ropa*, which illustrates what I have said above about the useful *por*. Some candidates found it difficult to access marks in questions (b), (c) and (d).

With regard to the reading tasks, to the surprise of examiners, candidates found the adapted literary text in Questions 4 (A) and 4 (B) more accessible than the journalistic text on the social media in Questions 6 (A) and (B). Candidates are to be congratulated on the marks that they gained in Questions 4(A) and 4 (B). The same holds true for the gap-filling comprehension task in Question 5. The first three gaps caused most problems but, while this was understandable in gap 1, it was less explicable in gaps 2 and 3. However the

explanation is simple: many candidates are still failing to distinguish between the common verbs *crear* / *creer* and the common vocabulary *medio* / *media* / *medias*. It was striking how many candidates chose *medias*, thus going for the claim that 'stockings free the artistic imagination'. Salvador Dalí would surely have enjoyed that concept but, unfortunately, it was wrong.

It was disappointing that candidates did not perform as well as was to be expected in Question 6 (A). The four questions all caused problems yet the answers were straightforward. Many seemed to think that they had to do with physical and psychological separation, but these concepts were not targeted. The multiple choice Question 6 (B) was more accessible but again some candidates chose the wrong option, indicating that they had not read the text closely enough.

Almost all candidates were able to access reasonable marks in Question 7. Marks were lost mainly in the translation of *sondeo*, *informe*, *aislados*, *los mayores*. Candidates should be reminded that there is a difference between *sondeo* and *informe*. As I implied above, more precision in the use of common vocabulary would lead to a significant improvement.

As predictable, Question 8 was the most difficult task in the examination, and it is here that examiners would like to see most improvement. In general, agreements were disregarded, genders were changed, verbs were not conjugated properly. In sentence 1 too many candidates could not use *gustar* correctly. Moreover, many did not know the difference between *calidad* and *cualidad*. In sentence 2, many could not translate 'teenage' or 'skirt'. In sentence 3, too many could not conjugate the basic verb *querer* nor use a subjunctive after it. In sentence 4 only the better candidates knew how to use the conditional tense.

Summary of key points

My comments above lead me to give the following advice about how teachers could help candidates to improve:

- It almost seems too obvious to say but candidates could improve by practising how to listen more closely to what is being said, and then transfer this knowledge to the tasks set.
- The same holds true for the reading tasks: there is no substitute for close reading of the text.
- Another gateway to improvement would be to practice in the classroom how to use common words such as *por* / *para*, *medio* / *media* / *medias*, *la ropa* never *las ropas*.
- I also wish to highlight that unremitting practice on the use of *gustar* would lead to a major improvement at every level.
- Furthermore, candidates should be taught the importance of learning how to conjugate verbs that are fundamental in every language such as *querer*.

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COMPONENT 3

General Comments

Candidates found the essay writing component a good opportunity to show their knowledge of the film/literary work as well as their powers of analysis. All questions focussed on characters rather than themes and were designed to elicit an appropriate response from candidates of all abilities. Most candidates showed significant knowledge and understanding of the chosen work, which is a credit to their teachers.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Most candidates chose a film to write their essays, being *El laberinto del fauno* the most popular choice. *Como agua para chocolate* was the most common literary work of choice for those who studied a book.

Successful candidates managed to focus on targeting the question and being concise. Responses that were merely a narration of the plot or a description of a scene or chapter did not allow candidates to access the top band on AO4, when such descriptions did not have a purpose or were not used as evidence of the point they were trying to make. Very few candidates confused the character and wrote an entirely irrelevant essay.

Some candidates wrote essays which were too long, which had an adverse impact on AO3, as more errors were likely to occur whilst potentially losing focus or becoming repetitive. Accuracy was at times an issue, most successful candidates managed to produce excellent essays by using clear language without many significant grammar mistakes. This had a positive knock-on effect on content.

Summary of key points

Points that could help candidates produce competent essays include:

- Reading the question carefully, identifying all aspects of the question before choosing the preferred option.
- Planning the essay thinking of different arguments and points of view.
- Structuring the essay in a logical manner and avoiding repetition.
- Keeping language clear.
- Being concise, avoid writing over long essays and reading the question frequently to stay focussed.
- Run several specific grammar checks: agreement, verb endings, spelling and idiom.
- Quoting accurately and purposefully.
- Ensuring a wide range of vocabulary and structures.
- Using the present historic to refer to events in the story when providing evidence to prove a point.



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