

GCE



**Chief Examiner's and
Principal Moderator's Report
Spanish**

Summer Series 2018



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Spanish for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE SPANISH

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 Speaking

Introduction

Once again I can say with confidence that our examiners were extremely well received in the centres and that they examined with great professionalism and sensitivity. It is always reassuring when listening to examiners' recordings to hear so many candidates clearly enjoying their oral and being led through it by examiners who are always affirming and engaged. The less confident students should also be encouraged to believe that the examiners will give them every opportunity to give of their best.

We have to remind centres to plan carefully for these examinations so as to minimise disruptions. Most centres have excellent, quiet locations but things can quickly spiral out of control in schools, with regard to noise, so good planning and constant vigilance are always necessary so that no candidate is disadvantaged. Hospitality can normally be relied on and most centres now provide a mobile tea/coffee station so that examiners can serve themselves. This is important as we encourage our examiners to take a break after every three candidates so as to stay fresh and focused. This is vital if each candidate is to be given her/his best chance to perform.

Discussion

As I indicated last year the dropping of the follow-up questions has given both candidates and examiners a new lease of life, with both able to enjoy the rich variety of topics stress-free. And the AO4 stipulation has opened up the treasure-trove of Spanish and Hispano-American culture in all its rich diversity. Looking back it seems such a travesty that our legacy specification students were directed away from this rich cultural experience. Thankfully, our present candidates, and obviously their teachers and language assistants, have embraced the new order with relish. As a result we enjoyed, as last year, a cornucopia of wonderfully interesting topics, a flavour of which I include below.

The hardy annuals of the past still survive, but with a Spanish twist, for example:

- La obesidad
- La droga y los jóvenes
- Desempleo juvenil
- El estrés
- Los medios sociales, etc

and, of course the standard Spanish topics were well to the fore, for example:

- La gastronomía
- Las tapas
- El turismo
- Regiones
- Ciudades
- Fiestas
- Los toros
- El flamenco, etc

And many candidates gave outstanding Top Band presentations on these topics, full of interesting insights and perspectives.

But many candidates cast the net much wider, exploring the entire geography of the Spanish speaking world, for example:

- Kayak Polo en España
- El fútbol en México y su importancia para la clase obrera
- Los caballos y la equitación en Latinoamérica y España
- La rivalidad entre Boca Juniors y River Plate
- Los mitos y las supersticiones en España

- La historia de la telenovela
- La batalla internacional librada por los artistas Dalí y Miró
- Admítelo... ¡bailar es la mejor medicina!
- La moda se puede comprar - el estilo se debe poseer?
- La dieta mediterránea está para chuparse los dedos?

- El Reggaetón... ¿música para todos los oídos?
- La fiesta de Santa Ana
- Problemas no discutidos en la cultura española
- El Referendum catalán

- El golf en España
- La batalla del vino del Haro
- El éxodo de los jóvenes españoles
- Ayapaneco, la lengua antigua de México
- La gastronomía de Euskadi

- Los premios Goya
- La representación de la comunidad LGBT en el cine estadounidense e hispánico
- El impacto del turismo en Machu Picchu
- Los efectos de los huracanes Irma y María sobre el turismo en Puerto Rico
- El balonmano en España

- Las mujeres y el deporte en España
- La crueldad hacia los animales en España
- El turismo ecológico
- ¿Cómo 'Las Chicas del Cable' se hizo tan popular fuera de España?
- Pablo Escobar - ¿Héroe o villano?
- ¿Convierten las series de Narcos el crimen en cuento de hadas?
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- Los narcotraficantes de Latinoamérica
- La leyenda de La Llorona
- Las Cholitas Luchadores
- San Antonio Demonio – un festival singular

- Tango – una danza o un idioma tácito
- La influencia musulmana en la arquitectura española
- ¿Impacto positivo o negativo de la canción ‘Despacito’?
- El primer ‘helicóptero’ de la historia – un invento español
- España y su programa especial
- La alta expectativa de vida en España

- Los niños de la calle, ¿un reflejo de la sociedad mejicana?
- La siesta
- ¿Estamos viviendo una polarización de la política española?
- Conectados a la tecnología, ¿desconectados de la familia?
- La música es la llave del alma

We must point out that all Presentations are judged on their own merits, whether the candidates choose standard or innovative topics. But when aiming for Top Band marks candidates should read the marking band descriptors carefully and endeavour to include detailed knowledge alongside interesting insights and perspectives. Some Presentations can be too superficial, or simply descriptive or biographical. Some candidates tend to be too factual with very little analysis or opinion and this is sometimes the case when speaking about the life of a famous person. Presenting is an important skill for young students going forward so they should be encouraged to pay attention to delivery, enthusiasm and timing.

Conversation

In terms of conversation, there is still some uncertainty about the topic of school. Some examiners were informed by teachers before the exam that their candidates had not been prepared for it as it is listed in the Specification as an A2 topic. CCEA guidance stipulates that candidates can discuss part-time jobs and school if they wish. It is clear that most candidates wish to talk about school life as it is one of their most important daily realities, but, where teachers have decided to leave this topic exclusively to A2, we, of course, comply with this.

Of the specifically AS topics those which candidates seem to favour are family, friends, hobbies and interests, sport, music, holidays and travel, social media, films and fashion. But they are happy to talk about stresses on young people, healthy eating and modern day challenges.

Feedback from visiting examiners suggested that some students need to work on developing their answers. Some examiners reported that some students were happy to say a few phrases in response to a question and could not manage a longer or more spontaneous answer, often requiring further prompting.

With regards to grammar, the usual mistakes were found. Overuse of the infinitive was a major problem, with many candidates failing to make an effort to conjugate at times. Incorrect use of GUSTAR remains commonplace, and the bugbears we mentioned last year, ending sentences and clauses with a preposition, incorporating the Saxon genitive into Spanish eg mi padre's trabajo, making up vocabulary eg profesores suportivos, using the past participle as a substitute for a preterite tense eg elegido estas asignaturas porque ..., and incorrect use of the gerund after prepositions eg es posible pasarlo bien sin bebiendo alcohol o tomando drogas.

Questions about last year's holiday or school visit to Spain or last weekend's activities often provoke responses completely in the present tense.

We only mention these negative aspects in order to help teachers identify those areas of grammar which require emphasis.

We, of course, as always, salute the tremendous work going on in Spanish classes up and down the country. Our job is mostly a delight, engaging with delightful students and teachers, and marvelling at the levels of fluency being achieved by so many. Lots of nice idioms abound eg dos gotas de agua, hacer buenas migas and la sangre llama. The enthusiasm for Spanish which teachers work so hard to inculcate in so many different ways is evident in every class.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 2

Listening, Reading and Use of Language

It was evident that candidates have adapted to the requirements and skills of the new format AS, now in its 2nd Year. It was generally well received by the 859 candidates who sat this examination. The mean mark for Section A was 18.5 while in Section B & C it was 49.6.

Section A – Listening

- Q1** Candidates scored highly in this question, on the topic of "Con el cigarro en la puerta del colegio". As no marks are awarded for A03, many copy their answers straight from what they hear. The first two answers, coming out of order, may have delayed some candidates answering this question but there was little evidence that they found difficulty finding the correct answers. Candidates should be advised that the information required to answer each question may not always run in exact question order. There may be a slight overlap of information across questions. Some lost marks by lifting material from the text which did not directly answer the question.
- (e)** Some candidates lost marks as they failed to mention cada año and cada día.
 - (f)** This was the most challenging question as cerebro was frequently not known. Many found nada más iniciarse hábito and no se ha desarrollado too difficult.
- Q2** This section on the topic of "¿Por qué es bueno que los niños se aburran?" was answered in English and proved extremely challenging for some. Unfortunately, some candidates ignored the rubric and answered this question in Spanish, subsequently failing to score any marks.
- (a)** This was not well answered as many failed to give 3 distinct parts to the answer to achieve the 3 possible marks.
 - (b)** Recursos was not always known.
 - (c)** Generally well done.

- (d) Metas was frequently not understood.
- (e) Many offered 2 pieces of information rather than 3 thus failing to achieve the 3rd mark.
- (f) Generally well done.

Section B – Reading

Q1 The reading comprehension passage on the topic “El <skate>: deporte de riesgo urbano” was very successful and very well done. With marks only available for A02, most copied the answers straight from the passage and so gained marks with relative ease. Lack of precision prevented some candidates from accessing all the available marks. Some experienced difficulty in achieving all 3 marks in Part 1 (e) by failing to mention se estableció muy rápidamente en Madrid y en otras ciudades españolas. Some confused the answers for Part (f) and (g).

Q2 Translation

The translation “Turismo de borrachera” was a fairly testing piece and so a good discriminator. It produced a wide variety of marks.

- 1 Many did not know the verb saltar and some had the young people shopping fully naked!
- 2 Most did not cope well with the concept of “so called” and found the phrase turismo de borrachera difficult to translate.
- 3 The word dedicados was translated poorly as “dedicated to” and very few were capable of rendering the last part of this section in even reasonable English.
- 4 Vecinos was rarely translated as “residents” or “locals”. Taparse los ojos proved impossible for most.
- 5 This section caused problems in its rendition in good English, many wrongly translating indudables as “undoubtable”.
- 6 The words veraniego, afea, idílico and costeros were not known by many candidates. Some had difficulty spelling “idyllic” and “coastal” in English.

Section C – Use of Language

This section was the main discriminator in the examination. With a total of 35 marks available, some candidates excelled but many floundered.

- C1** Generally quite well handled.
 - (d) Some struggled with putting the irregular durmió into the future tense. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of accuracy when it comes to using accents.
- C2** (b) Many saw dónde and wrongly assumed location. Otherwise well done.
- C3** Some struggled with prepositions especially in Part (d).
- C4** Many candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with the use of pronouns and failed to score and marks in this question.
- C5** This was very badly handled and many candidates lost a considerable amount of marks. Many struggled with some basic grammatical concepts. Gustar and the personal ‘a’ posed problems for many. Very few could translate “my house is half a kilometre from”. Only a small number knew doler with parts of the body and hardly anyone could cope with the use of the present tense and desde hace.

There was a glaring lack of core vocabulary, words such as química, pie, ayer, parar and plaza were frequently not known. It is hoped that, with more emphasis on grammar in the new format GCSE examination, this section will improve in the future.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

Overall, the examiners noted a generally impressive use of Spanish just one year out of GCSE, and teachers and candidates should feel rightly proud. Examiners fully appreciate this is a paper that makes substantial demands of the candidate in a range of skills, from grammatical accuracy and use of idiom to subtle textual analysis and understanding of often complex themes and concepts.

Still, one examiner noted that some weaknesses in some candidates' performance might be a 'knock-on effect of limited writing practice ... in analytical essays' in GCSE. There are some instances where candidates might focus less on the structure suggested by the bullet points and instead incline towards story-telling. The latter can mean that while the language may be good, this can be an effect of the use of pre-learned material, leading to uneven essays both linguistically and in terms of development of argument. Inevitably this leads to some loss of performance in terms of AO2 and even AO4 (where, remember, the knowledge must be relevant to the question). That said, examiners saw much evidence of questions that were well answered and where adherence to the bullet points was good.

Comments Upon Individual Questions

Q1 Solas was the most popular question and it was noted that the answers to both Part (a) and (b) tended often to be very similar. There was, of course, some overlap in the questions but they were very different in their focus and if students wish to access the higher bands, they should be encouraged to zone in on the specifics of the question and avoid the temptation to produce, at times, somewhat bland, catch-all answers, with a high proportion of pre-prepared material and minimal attention to the specific focus. Many students who chose Question 1 (a) did not fully appreciate the key word 'impacto' and therefore proceeded to produce the standard account of the nature of María and Rosa's relationship. While some of this could in the end be relevant, it inevitably led to less focused answers. Likewise, few students really dealt in a precise and targeted way with what Rosa actually did in the house, the changes she made, the furniture she rescued, the significance of these changes, etc, and then failed to follow up, again in a carefully precise way, on the evolution of María's reaction to these.

As the films and texts become embedded in the syllabus, and given that answers are expected to be no more than 300 words approximately, students must be encouraged to avoid inclusion of material covering all aspects of the text, rather than a more thoughtfully targeted answer to a carefully read question. Examiners are on the look-out for a carefully crafted, as opposed to a rambling response and it will be rewarded with top marks.

(b) Was slightly less popular of the two but overall was perhaps more competently treated. It may have been that the key word, 'maternidad' was less easily overlooked by a 'rush-to-get-writing' approach. Some students did, however, possibly out of a hasty reading, miss the fact that it was 'amiga' and therefore not a reference to don Emilio. While it might be thought that this was a relatively minor aspect of the film, it is, like most details, a crucial one, as it illustrates a key aspect of maternity and shows how María's attitude evolves towards a greater acceptance of her mother's wishes and the idea of maternity despite its conventionality, as well as showing her coming to terms with her past and overcoming her hitherto bitter attitude to the pueblo. María has become

less cynical and more empathetic, prepared to think for once of others rather than herself. As noted above, this paper makes substantial demands on students but one, in particular, is developing the skill of concision (i.e. staying closer to the 300-350 recommended wordage) accompanied by pertinence and attention to the question.

- Q2** Was on a par in terms of popularity with Question 3 and answers spread evenly between Parts (a) and (b). Once again, the key word in Question 2 (a) was 'efecto' but many candidates tended to slip into a much looser general account of Moncho and don Gregorio's relationship with the inevitable result of answers which were too long and/or too unfocused. Candidates should be encouraged of the value of showing the courage to omit what is not directly relevant to the question's focus even though it may be indirectly relevant, in the interests of a more tightly structured answer. Most of the marks in this paper are devoted to AO2, and much of the AO4 mark is dictated by relevance. So essentially 55 marks out of 75 are determined by the relevance of the answer.
- Q3** Was popular and slightly more candidates opted for Part (a) rather than Part (b). Candidates showed a good understanding of the film and its symbolism. It seems that students do not feel too much pressure to include technical cinematographic details in their analysis (lighting, camera angles, music) and this is as it should be but there were some who managed to incorporate an element of such analysis in a pertinent way and with a light touch which nicely enhanced their responses.
- Q4** Continues to be popular with many centres and the topics of food and the relationship with the sisters were accessible and produced some fine answers.

Language

The standard of language was pleasing in a great number of cases. Some examiners would have liked to see more evidence of high-level language. Where language issues did emerge it was in relation to aspects such as the personal 'a', ser/estar, misuse of the reflexive passive, or use of it where not required, pronominal use of verbs (e.g. '*Pablo convierte en parte de la familia de Alfredo' for 'se convierte') gustar, agreements and genders and the mixing up of names. Also verb phrases and prepositional use: '*logra a vender' or 'quiere a hacer', '*Pablo comience de ver las cosas'. As the last example showed, at this level many students showed an inconsistent grasp of the subjunctive but, that said, it was still impressive to see students at this level deploying the subjunctive correctly and confidently in many instances. Examiners were especially sensitive to students at least striving for greater sophistication even if it led to occasional errors at a complex level. In general, accentuation and spelling were of a high standard though misplaced accents are a regular feature and may in some cases be linked to the lack of attention to detail that comes of writing over-long essays, thus reducing the time spent checking and revising. One recurring error in many answers was the capitalization of don as in *Don Emilio or *Don Gregorio rather than don Emilio.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 1 Speaking

Introduction

This first year of the New Specification posed significant challenges for examiners asked to cope with new mark schemes and weightings as well as the new format of Discussion. Of course teachers and candidates were equally challenged. We planned carefully for these changes and it would appear from examiner and centre feedback that we have all made a fairly painless transition.

The annual logistical issues of agreeing dates, timetabling, ensuring a quiet atmosphere, briefing the candidates, hospitality etc challenge us more and more as schools seem to get busier year on year but, thankfully, the Spanish teaching and examining community has built up a reservoir of good will, camaraderie and cordiality over the years which enables us to overcome any problems. However we wish to provide everyone with helpful feedback and advice with regard to the two elements of the new A2 oral examination.

Discussion

This element requires the greatest emphasis this year for a number of reasons. The mark scheme is new and gives the Discussion a higher premium than the Conversation, the format is new, giving the candidate a one minute Introduction followed by a five minute Discussion. Many examiners felt this new format was less satisfactory than the previous version. The one minute Introduction was, in some cases a distraction. Some used it as an overview and that gave clarity and direction, but often candidates used it as a first bullet point. In some cases there was a tendency to present five almost unrelated pieces. It would be harsh to call them 5 separate mini- presentations but candidates sometimes failed to make the top band because of this. Many felt that this part of the oral did not have the same flow as in other years and therefore disappointed. Some felt that an intellectual "spinal cord" was missing from many individual Discussions, although many were still very interesting.

I think it is clear that this element needs some tweaking on the part of teachers, candidates and examiners. We would make the following suggestions:

- 1 The one minute Introduction needs to be an overview, not a first bullet point.
- 2 Following that we believe that a candidate would be better served by only having 3/4 bullet points which would give time for a proper discussion.
- 3 If a candidate has 5 bullet points it is difficult for an examiner to cover them all with any depth and yet an examiner does not want to exclude what might be the candidate's pièce de résistance.
- 4 Having 5 also seems to encourage the 5 mini-presentations approach which might be self-penalising for the candidate.
- 5 The topic should have a 'spinal cord', ie a coherent unity of purpose, not a series of only loosely connected ideas. For example choosing a region and then listing 5 bullet points eg geography, history, gastronomy, culture and tourism is likely to produce this desultory approach. Each one on its own could easily produce a meaningful coherent discussion. It is, of course, difficult to be categorical about these issues because, in the right hands, anything can be marked by genius, but the general point is a good one.

For example, one examiner wrote: “La gastronomía andaluza looked like it would be very straight forward, but the candidate was able to talk about the Arab cultural influence and the interference of the Reyes Católicos to subvert this by making pork the regional staple dish!” So this whole Discussion had a clear coherence and many interesting and novel insights.

Many candidates chose the time-honoured topics:

- La tauromaquia
- La gastronomía
- Las fiestas
- El deporte
- El Clásico

Many centres selected one region or one country and had the students look at different aspects. This can provide a unified focus but sometimes it is difficult to find enough quality aspects, depending, of course, on the numbers of candidates. We would remind everyone that the Spanish-speaking world is vast and that the casts of personalities, issues and cultures will be able to provide topics for generations to come. It would appear, ironically, that this year the AS candidates, preparing their Presentations, cast their nets more widely than their A2 counterparts so a glance at the AS Examiners’ Report may prove instructive.

Some interesting and novel topics were:

- La movida madrileña
- La quinceañera en Méjico
- El muralismo mejicano
- La guerra sucia
- El proceso de paz en Colombia
- El día de los muertos
- La revolución cubana
- El Tango
- El Valle Sagrado
- Las abuelas y las madres de la Plaza de Mayo
- El nacionalismo catalán
- La guía de la buena esposa
- Honduras, el país más peligroso del mundo
- El papel del fuego en los festivales españoles
- La mitología asturiana

Conversation

The Conversation element of this New Specification A2 oral is an improvement on the past for examiners and candidates alike since the topics list for A2 is much more wide and varied than in the past. Certainly that proved to be the case and everyone seemed to embrace this greater variety. So many candidates at this level have great fluency now and the results in the oral component reflected this. Huge congratulations are owed to the teachers and assistants who are producing these candidates, but, ironically, we are concerned to hear that many schools who have traditionally entered healthy numbers of candidates, and continue to do so, are now being forced to prepare without the help of language assistants. This is hugely frustrating for all of us, but, in the present climate, it appears that each languages department has to fight this battle school by school.

We normally list the common areas of grammatical concern but these have been so well documented in the past and appear again in this year's AS oral report, so let us begin this new era on a more positive note. We have referred earlier to the impressive levels of natural fluency, and so much of our home-grown talent can compete on a level basis with native speakers. One examiner was very impressed by a candidate who, when asked was he not worried by the challenge of moving away to university, replied, quite spontaneously: "Bueno, como mínimo, no tendré que rendir cuentas a nadie", and another examiner, struggling to compose a question on the competing negatives and positives of a particular issue was quite astonished to hear: "Sí, por cierto, es un arma de doble filo".

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit A2 2

Listening and Reading

This was the first examination of the New Specification for GCE A2/2 Spanish and was divided into 2 discrete sections, Section A, assessing Listening, and Section B, assessing Reading. This unit differed slightly from the previous Legacy award in that it was solely a language paper, with the Literature component now assessed in a separate unit. This is a beneficial change since it allows candidates to focus more on specific language skills and not have a diverse range of components to contend with in one long paper at one sitting. There were also some changes to the weightings of certain questions and in Section B, Reading, there was a new element in the form of a summary in English with the sentence completion exercise being removed. The majority of candidates coped well with the requirements of the paper and attempted all questions. Inevitably, the two sections of this unit produced a variety of performances that reflected candidates' differing abilities and allowed for discrimination. Only a very small minority found the examination really challenging. The main elements of stretch and challenge this year were to be found in Question 2 of the Listening section as well as in Question 3 (the Summary in English of a Spanish text) and Question 4 (the prose translation into Spanish) of the Reading section.

This year there was a slight decrease by 51 in the candidature for this Assessment Unit, making a total entry of 414. This can, in part, be attributed to the fact that no candidate was repeating the unit given that this was the first examination of the series. The maximum raw mark for the combined components of this unit was 100; 25 for Listening and 75 for Reading. The combined mean for the unit was 68.78. The mean mark for Section A was 17.13 out of 25 (in the 2017 series it was 20.7 out of 30). The separate mean for Section B was 51.77 out of 75 (last year it was 32.67 out of 50). However, comparison with the previous series under the old legacy specification is almost meaningless given the different weightings and new elements this year.

The Listening test was effective in differentiating between candidates but the majority coped quite well with the demands of this section. Question 1(e) caused most problems and many candidates did not convey in full or understand the first point of it being suspicious that a research project financed by Samsung had come up with results favourable to the company's sales in the education sector. In this part of the Listening test there was still the perennial problem of candidates producing in their answers a phonetic transcription of the sounds of words they thought they had heard without really understanding the words of the original text. This meant that sometimes candidates spelt words incorrectly or with the wrong syntax, demonstrating a lack of real understanding. Inevitably, marks are forfeited due to this. In Question 2 of the Listening there was evidence that some candidates appeared surprisingly unfamiliar with the current affairs topic of multiculturalism, even though it is central to the A2 programme of study. Questions 2 (c), (e) and (f) proved most problematic for many candidates. Some candidates conveyed their responses to question 2 (c) in such a way that failed to capture clearly the idea of the need to avoid the increasing number of pluralist or multicultural societies from becoming more divided or less integrated. Responses to Question 2 (e) were often incomplete or unclear and the notion that poor immigrants enter at the bottom of the economic ladder was lost on many. In Question 2(f) the last two points about politicians seeking electoral gain by stoking up racist fears were also often missed or misunderstood.

Section B, Reading, also threw up a range of marks but candidates generally coped well in most questions. However, the stretch and challenge elements, mentioned earlier, did test candidates and there is still work to be done in these areas. Question 1, the gap-filling exercise, was, on the whole, well done but it did produce a spread of marks. Unlike the same exercise last year, very low marks were rare here which was encouraging. Some candidates were wrong-footed with the gender of 'manos' and correspondingly opted for the wrong alternative between 'nuestros' and 'nuestras'. Most candidates spotted the subjunctive after 'puede que...', which was good. It is perhaps worth reminding candidates to take care when copying the appropriate word for each gap. Some candidates carelessly omitted the accent on 'sí' in gap (g), but since only one spelling from the menu was provided the candidate got the mark, but he or she would have forfeited the mark if the alternative word 'si' had also been on the list of words in the menu, since obviously this would have changed the meaning of the sentence.

Question 2, the Reading Comprehension component, was generally well answered and, provided they understood the meaning of the question, most candidates simply copied the relevant part of the text in front of them. This is fine. Other candidates adopted a 'spray-gun' approach by copying the broadly relevant section of the text in an indiscriminating fashion, thus ensuring they got the marks, even though many answers were much too long as a result and contained irrelevant material. Candidates here are only awarded marks for AO2, Understanding and Response, and provided their language and syntax are accurate and do not obscure understanding, then they will get the mark(s). As in responses to questions in Question 1 of the Listening section, this 'scatter-gun' tactic gives candidates the chance of hitting on the answer. Consequently, most candidates found this question very accessible, despite there being a number of weak responses on occasions, particularly to Question (c) where often the subject noun of the sentence was omitted with candidates writing simply 'había dejado embarazada' or 'la había dejado embarazada'. If they had used the plural form 'habían' to convey the impersonal subject as in 'la habían dejado embarazada' the candidates would have got the mark, but many were unaware of the use of the third person plural in this context. Question 2 (h), surprisingly, also caused problems with only one point being conveyed on occasions.

Question 3 was the new component in this New Specification, the 100-word English Summary of a Spanish text. This question proved to be the most problematic and challenging part of the Paper and candidates very rarely achieved marks in the top band (13-15). The skill of summarising as opposed to simply translating – often incorrectly – was noticeably absent at times. Most candidates appeared to have a sense of what the passage was about and so scored marks in Bands 3 and 4. However, many candidates struggled to highlight the key pertinent points. Hence, the summaries were often unbalanced and uneven, with omissions and misunderstandings. The main misunderstanding was the notion of ‘suspender’ and ‘suspensio’, which most candidates understood as the boy in question being suspended from school. Candidates also wrongly interpreted the words ‘suspendía Lengua pese a tener casi un siete en el examen’. Clearly candidates did not appear familiar with the Spanish school grading system but, even disregarding this, careful reading of the rest of the sentence and of the first paragraph made it clear that Abel’s son did not pass the examination due to his failure to submit homework during the year. A substantial percentage of candidates failed to mention clearly the key point about the agreement made previously between Abel Gutiérrez and his son’s school and how this agreement was subsequently broken after the school changed its criteria. Some candidates found it difficult to summarise the text in 100 words, but the 10% tolerance rule meant that candidates were able to complete the task within the absolute word limit and, consequently, were not penalised.

Question 4, the prose translation, was the most effective element in terms of reflecting candidates’ knowledge of grammatical structures and tenses. Pleasingly, most candidates performed well and there were some examples of excellent grammatical knowledge and some clever translations. The main challenges were the structures ‘she felt ashamed’, ‘it has been closed for two hours’, ‘she hopes they will turn a blind eye’, ‘she yearns for’, ‘hoping no one sees him’, ‘he was made redundant’, ‘support his family’, ‘two faces’, ‘the new poor’, and all too often the number ‘500’ was incorrectly translated. Frequently, candidates incorrectly inserted the preposition ‘para’ after ‘busca’ when translating ‘as she searches for’, and the personal ‘a’ was often omitted by many candidates when translating the words ‘support his family’. Finally, the meaning and usage of ‘hace’ and ‘desde hace’ with time were confused occasionally. Nevertheless, the overall standard here was encouraging and will hopefully keep improving with the increasing emphasis now on the formal learning and testing of grammar at both GCSE and AS level.

Assessment Unit A2 3 Extended Writing

This was the first year of the revised specification and the start of a single paper for the Extended Writing at A2. However the cohort had already experienced a single paper for Extended Writing at AS. Generally it was felt by examiners that candidates are advantaged by sitting the Extended Writing as a separate paper. It is no longer the final question in a long, fairly complex language paper but a single entity in which students can take a fresh approach and focus more closely.

The texts were:

García Lorca: La casa de Bernarda Alba

Muñoz Molina: El dueño del secreto

Sender: Réquiem por un campesino español

Neruda: Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada

By far the most popular was the Lorca, an accessible and succinct text with well-defined characters, a simple plot and great emotional impact. Also popular, though less so, was Sender’s Réquiem which is also succinct and accessible and deals with issues of social justice

in a very specific historical period in Spain. Less popular was the Neruda poetry with only one centre opting for it and less popular again was the Muñoz Molina, chosen only by a single candidate.

Generally candidates across the range of abilities were able to respond well to the questions. Most were suitably prepared and scored quite well in AO4. Weaker candidates tended to score less in all AOs as their inability to control the language affected the other areas. In AO2, where they need to analyse and respond to the question, there was a tendency to use pre-prepared material, either huge chunks or isolated sentences that tended to be repeated in centres. Teachers should be discouraged from taking this approach and advised to ensure students really know their text so that they can respond personally to any question asked. There were many examples of this and students were well rewarded for genuine personal responses argued coherently with relevant textual references and appropriate quotes. A number of candidates were awarded full marks.

Criticisms from assistant examiners included the perennial language issues facing weaker students; absence or misuse of the personal *a*, poor verb conjugations, anglicised syntax, lack of adjectival agreements, poor control of pronouns. There was an issue, some felt, with planning and some students launched into writing all they knew about the text without taking time to consider setting out the issues relevant to the question. There was a tendency to tell the story in some cases and questions were at times only partially answered. One examiner bemoaned the barely legible handwriting of a small number of candidates. However, all examiners commented on the excellence of many centres and candidates and the predominance of 'sound' answers from candidates with sufficient control of Spanish to produce logical, coherent and detailed essays with enough evidence to back up their judgements.

There was no evidence of candidates not having enough time, in fact many wrote detailed plans or rough-work essays. The readability of the question paper was considered excellent by all examiners and the language used was appropriate for the candidates. The mark-scheme was considered straightforward to apply.

The examiners would like to advise caution regarding the Indicative Content that is a prerequisite of the mark-scheme. Examiners setting the paper deliberately keep these suggestions brief and concise to avoid them being used as blueprints for the various themes and topics. It should also be noted that the rubric included with the Indicative Content points out that the ideas expressed are only suggestions and that candidates may include in their responses other relevant ideas providing they are based on the text and developed coherently. The examiners will generously reward personal, genuine and well-argued responses that may not necessarily include all of the points in the Indicative Content.

Contact details

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