

GCE



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

Summer Series 2019



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2019 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 section on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE SPANISH

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 Speaking

Overview

In numbers virtually identical to last year, 647 AS candidates were examined by 24 examiners in 75 centres. Teachers can be assured that the evidence of the recordings confirms that candidates are being examined with sensitivity and empathy and to a very high professional standard. They are placed at their ease and afforded every opportunity to display their ability in spoken Spanish which, in so many cases, is absolutely remarkable and in almost all cases, admirably competent. We salute the work that is being done in schools to achieve such levels a year on from GCSE.

We have no wish to be repetitive, but we must continue to ask for good planning and vigilance in schools to ensure that candidates and examiners have the best environment possible in which to carry out the orals. Once the oral exam begins, the candidates and examiners are at the mercy of those who have to plan for calm and zero interruptions. In the overwhelming percentage of centres this planning and provision are exemplary, but in a small number there were oversights, which had the potential to cause major problems. Hospitality towards examiners is generally excellent and much appreciated, but again, in a small number of centres, examiners had to fend for themselves. All that is required is a kettle, some tea and coffee and a few biscuits. Most examiners bring some food and they are encouraged to take short breaks after every 3 candidates, so as to remain fresh.

Presentation

The AS Presentation format is working very well. We have given a lot of direction and exemplar titles in the last two years and teachers and candidates appear to have taken all of this advice on board. Most candidates present with confidence and enthusiasm for their topic and adhere closely to the time constraint. The best presentations will have interesting, often novel and mature insights, interesting language and stylish phrases and some personal engagement. As we have said before, even the most banal-sounding topic can take flight in the right hands. The variety and innovative spirit displayed in the presentations is heart-warming, as is the amount our students are learning about Spanish-speaking countries and their cultures. For once, we should pay homage to Netflix and the internet. There is certainly no longer any need to give lists of exemplar topics. Candidates, assistants and teachers are exploring the vast world of Spanish and Hispanic cultures. A few of the more unusual ones this year were:

- *Las Chicas del Cable*
- Civilizaciones precolombinas
- La película Coco y el Día de Muertos
- Los deportes para discapacitados en España
- *El Loco de la Catedral Justo Gallego Martínez*
- La ONCE
- La inmigración italiana a Argentina
- Femicidio en Latinoamérica
- El balconing

Conversation

The levels being attained by some of our candidates are truly astonishing. Here again, the access to Spanish and Hispanic societies and cultures via electronic media, as well as opportunities to travel is having a profound effect, but there is no doubt that the key ingredient is hugely committed and inspiring teaching which so many of the candidates themselves highlight.

Candidates must know that we do not expect perfection. Some grammatical licence must be given at this level, but the candidates should be encouraged to chat freely in their classes so that they can think on their feet and develop their answers in the exam. Developing often means just chatting about a topic, it doesn't mean having to have a detailed knowledge.

As in previous years, candidates, especially the ones at the middle and lower end of the range, relied, sometimes heavily, on pre-learnt material. This is inevitable and we are not critical of candidates under stress relying on this crutch. We adults would do the same for any interview, but candidates should be encouraged to listen to as much quality Spanish as possible and to use it in a relaxed way in conversation classes.

With regard to use of grammar in the conversation, some candidates continue to overuse the infinitive and struggle with basic conjugations which they would have learned for GCSE. Verbs such as *tener*, *poder* and *hacer* cause problems, as well as incorrect use of pronouns and agreements with *gustar*. We also heard a few examples of *suelo* being used as an adverb to replace *normalmente*, instead of being used as a verb structure eg '*suelo salgo los fines de semana*'. *Gustar* should be practised and practised because, when used correctly, it never fails to impress examiners.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 2

Listening, Reading and Use of Language

This paper was generally well received by the 894 candidates who sat this examination. Although some candidates found some sections challenging, there were also sections which were very accessible to all candidates, which meant that the paper was successful in discriminating between candidates of different abilities. The mean mark for Section A was **14.7** while in Section B and C it was **49.9**.

Section A: Listening

The Listening test proved to be very challenging for many candidates. A small number of candidates infringed the rubric and answered in the wrong language.

- Q1** The question on the topic of *Galicia – una región envejecida* posed problems for some candidates. Some managed to transcribe successfully what they heard in order to answer the questions. However, many lifted sections of language and slotted them as answers into the five questions which did not address the questions and so showed no real understanding.
- (a) The spelling of *envejecidas* caused great difficulty. Some confused the set of statistics. Some candidates did not focus on the region of Galicia even though it was stated in the question.
 - (b) Generally well answered.
 - (c) Many were unable to spell *soledad* and *aislada*.
 - (d) The spellings of *organizaciones* and *ciudadanos* were sometimes so unrecognisable that the marks could not be awarded.
 - (e) Generally well done.
- Q2** Many candidates found the question on the topic of *Los desconectados* difficult. Despite the fact that this topic should have been very accessible to them, many struggled to answer correctly.
- (a) Many did not understand *la mitad*.
 - (b) Very few were able to explain the compulsive use of the smart phone.
 - (c) It was surprising the number of candidates who failed to answer this correctly as it was the main focus of the whole piece. Some actually said the opposite that the *desconectados* were those who were always on social media.
 - (d) Generally well done.
 - (e) *Engancha* and *esclavizando* proved too difficult for most.
 - (f) Some only mentioned that her contacts put up *fotos atractivas*. They also needed to mention the *cosas buenas*. Some did not understand *envidiaba*.
 - (g) Most understood *escaparse de la falsedad de las redes sociales* but *fingir* and *hacerse valer* posed real problems for many.
 - (h) Most candidates did not understand *estar pendiente de*, although some of the more able candidates were able to pick up a mark here.

Section B: Reading

Q1 The reading comprehension passage on the topic of *Las corridas - ¿en peligro de extinción?* was very well done and most scored highly on it.

With marks only being awarded for AO2, candidates gained marks with relative ease. However, some lost marks by copying sections from the text which did not answer the question. Teachers should remind students of the importance of giving a response which fits the requirement of the question and not providing information which is not related to a particular question. Some experienced difficulty with (d), (f) and (k).

Q2 Translation This proved to be a challenging question for a number of candidates and provided a range of both high and low quality translations.

Some lost marks by translating too literally e.g. *calls the attention, the new technologies, to visit this bus*. Some words and phrases which proved difficult were *desde fuera, por dentro, cuadrados, destinado a, pantallas táctiles, máquina expendedora, refrescos, chavales, ocio, puede haber, perjudicar*.

The spelling of *silhouette* was frequently incorrect.

The phrase *en actitud de* was rarely translated.

Section C: Use of Language

This was the most challenging part of the examination and proved to be a good differentiator of ability. There was a very wide range of performances.

Q1 This was quite well handled, apart from some difficulties with the following parts:

(b) The accent was sometimes missing from *podría*.

(c) Some candidates tried to put *acompañarte* into the perfect tense.

Q2 Many struggled with use of *ser* and *estar* especially in (c) and (e).

Q3 This question on prepositions proved very difficult for most candidates. It was clear that most simply guessed which preposition to use.

Q4 In the '*por/para*' question there was a clear distinction between the stronger and less able candidates.

Q5 The final section, the translation of sentences from English to Spanish, was beyond the ability of many candidates and was very badly handled. Surprisingly, basic vocabulary was not known by many, e.g. *botas, estar callado, alemana, capítulo* and *lápices*. Many lost marks due to poor spelling, use of accents and grammatical inaccuracy e.g. *¿dónde?, conozco a, leí, volví*.

Hopefully, with the new, more grammar based GCSE, candidates will perform better in this section in the future.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

The examiners found the paper fair and accessible to all standards of candidature. Some questions were more open-ended than others, but in general it was felt that the bullet-points provided guidance on what was expected and that the advantage of the more open question, for example, Question 3(b) on *El Bola* '¿Cómo es el padre de Alfredo?' had the advantage of being accessible to weaker candidates, while not preventing strong candidates from taking the discussion to a higher level. Usually the structure of the bullet points allowed for provision of knowledge in the first two bullet-points and a more reflective response to the third.

In terms of popularity of questions, *Solas* and *El Bola* seem to be consolidating their position as the most popular texts. There is a healthy following for *La lengua de las mariposas* and a core of devotees to *Como agua para chocolate*. Question 1(a) was the overwhelmingly popular choice for *Solas*, and Question 2(a) for *La lengua de las mariposas* and a more even balance among those who opted for Question 3(a) and Question 3(b). For *Como agua*, Question 4(a) was the most popular choice. A very small number of candidates attempted Question 2(b) and produced very competent responses. Some examiners noted some candidates' reliance on pre-prepared material as opposed to answering the question set.

In terms of the individual questions, the candidates seem well versed by now in the need to follow the bullet-points, but always in pursuit of an answer to the headline question. The bullet-points were rarely addressed for themselves, but appropriately seen as aiding development of the discussion of the main question. Increasingly, there are good signs of well-structured introductions that try to dissect the question to draw out what is being asked and indicating how this will be addressed in the course of the answer.

There are fewer instances of the use of very generic, one-size-fits-all introductions that are not tailored to the demands of the question. That said, there are still frequent cases of introductions consisting of a re-statement of the question, often using the same words and merely expressing an intention to answer the question, e.g. 'En esta redacción tengo la intención de explicar cómo María cambia de actitud durante la película y por qué lo hace.'

In a severely time-limited exam, with a notional target of 300-400 words, candidates should strive to: avoid overly long essays which may end up as rambling and unfocused; avoid inclusion of phrasing which may be stating the obvious and adding nothing in terms of meaning or comment; avoid spending time on overly detailed plans which might be more effectively used in elaborating the essay itself.

As regards use of language, some examiners, as in previous years, noted a very basic use of language structures predominating with few candidates willing or able to be more adventurous in their use of language and higher phrases. Issues such as the personal a, confusion of *ser/estar*, *por/para* and uncertainty over use of the reflexive form, difficulties with verbs like *gustar*, and the usual problems with agreements and genders continue to pop up. Noticeable, however, was a much more consistent, correct usage, at all levels, of the subjunctive. Teachers are to be commended on achieving this even at this early stage of AS.

As before, examiners are particularly receptive to students who clearly strive for sophistication even where the result might be to incur occasional errors due to operating at that more complex level. In general, accentuation and spelling were of a good standard, though misplaced accents continue to be a regular feature and again, the advice on time spent checking and revising continues to apply.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 1 Speaking

Introduction

451 candidates were examined by 16 examiners in 73 centres, a 9% increase on last year. The general comments made about AS 1, with regard to the sensitivity of the examining and the organisation in the centres, are equally applicable at this level.

Discussion

In previous reports we have given a general overview of the whole examining experience but we would also like to share with you some of the thoughts of the experienced individual examiners. Our examiners give very detailed feedback, so it is only right that we share some of that with you. You will see how appreciative they are of the effort which candidates and teachers put in and you will gain interesting insights from what they say.

One wrote as follows:

“A wide variety of topics were covered for the discussion element ranging from environmental issues such as *¿Cómo está dañando su fauna la sociedad española?* to political historical events such as *La revolución en Cuba* or *La movida madrileña*. Other interesting topics were in relation to cultural aspects such as *Los Mariachis* or *El Tango*.

In general, most candidates responded positively to challenging questions or interaction with the examiner. However, some candidates' performances indicated that they had prepared and researched a limited amount of information.

On a positive aspect, the choice of topics and the way candidates dealt with the discussions depended very much on the candidates' abilities and the amount of individual research effort. It is worth noting that they were all original in content and delivery and there was very little repetition of ideas or expressions in candidates from the same centre, which showed individual preparation.

Overall, my impression was very encouraging. Candidates were convincing and passionate about the topics they talked about and displayed confidence and enthusiasm.

I particularly enjoyed the discussions where the candidates had unusual and very personal approaches, which made the discussions come to life and many of these candidates showed excellent potential.”

Another wrote:

“Three bullet points for the discussion is becoming more common, and frankly, more welcome. The best ones were those which delved quite deeply into specific subthemes – the all-encompassing titles were more difficult to examine, and less likely to lead to genuine discussion. A small number of candidates still propose to discuss something as wide as the Spanish civil War, the course of it, Franco's rise to power and life under a Francoist regime – all in 5 minutes!!! Candidates need to be steered away from such an approach.

Achieving an acceptable balance between pre-learned discourses and spontaneous discussion is key in the discussion and the best candidates do that ever so well.

Candidate XXXX is a perfect example of how to get a grade A, by thorough preparation and 'ownership' of the conversation. He was less comfortable on the 'unexpected' but steered things to his advantage.

There was a great variety of topics out there this year, very stimulating for the examiner. Ones which caught my eye were:

- Argentine economy in the inter war years.
- The impact of the Seat 600 on Spanish economy and culture
- The rivalry between River Plate and Boca Juniors
- Down's Syndrome in Spain
- Los niños robados
- Las cholitas of Bolivia
- Irish participation in the Spanish civil War.”

These two examiners capture the rich variety and scope of what we all find. There is phenomenal work being done across all our centres and we have the privilege of sharing in this inspiring story. The sheer depth and variety is best seen in the Discussion element. Some other titles which illustrate the rich landscape we get to explore were:

- La Guerra fría entre Cuba y EEUU
- La Salsa
- Los concursos de belleza en Venezuela
- Los coches cubanos
- La ciudad de las flores en Nicaragua
- El Surrealismo
- La crisis de los misiles en Cuba
- El peronismo
- Abimael Guzmán y Sendero Luminoso

Needless to say all A2 oral examiners have considerable prepping to do for this wide-ranging component but we enjoy it and learn a lot.

Conversation

Here also, the observations of our examiners are extremely instructive:

One examiner wrote:

“This year, I was surprised about the number of pupils who were keen to talk about politics and their role as new voters in the potential future changes. For many of these young people, this was their first time voting.

Future and career opportunities were another common topic of conversation. Past experiences, as well as part-time jobs or volunteer contributions, also took a lot of our conversation time. Another topic of conversation candidates engaged easily with is the environment and inequality in society.

Communication and pronunciation were of a very high standard across all candidates and they were all extremely interesting individuals with promising careers and lives. The use of language was the clearest indicator of these candidates' abilities and what differentiated their performances.

The use of subjunctive expressions, consistently correct use of verbal tenses or more

complex tenses in conversation is only common in outstanding candidates and in those who rely on pre-rehearsed speeches. On the other hand, I think students are confident and comfortable in their delivery, once communication is established. There is a spontaneous and relaxed exchange of information, even when their use of language is not as accurate or fluent.”

One new examiner wrote as follows:

“This was my first year conducting the exams and it has been a very rewarding and enriching experience. The warm welcome extended by all school staff and the Spanish teachers in particular was a joy. The pupils were all very well prepared and were keen to talk about themselves and their plans, interests and careers. A few candidates struggled, but for the most part I was really impressed by the candidates’ resourcefulness and resilience to be able to answer whatever question I asked.

Those candidates who performed less well tended to offer less information and, face to face, it was clear that they were needing another question fairly quickly. I was impressed by the top candidates’ ability and desire to talk in an informed, critical, spontaneous and fluent manner about every question I asked them and this explains the high marks I have given.”

We think these heartfelt comments capture the oral exam experience in all its facets.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit A2 2 Listening and Reading

Section A: Listening

The topics of this Listening were The *Environment* and *Technology*. In Question 1, the specific focus was the sustainability of the planet and how we must make ethical decisions about the use of the earth's natural resources. This was generally well received, as students are familiar with the topic and they coped well with the vocabulary used and the concepts discussed. Also, the parts of the passage which the candidates needed in order to answer the questions were well flagged up. However, examiners found that Question 1(c) challenged quite a number of candidates who missed out on the idea of '*la justicia social*'. Question 1(e), in which candidates needed to understand the phrase '*un fin en sí misma*', also proved difficult for many, but examiners noted that few were scoring less than 8/10 for this question. In Question 2, the focus was on the rapid changes taking place in the world of work due to new technology. This question requires answers in English, so it is generally more comfortable for candidates. In Question 2(b), the mention of taxi drivers and other drivers caused problems if candidates did not mention both in their answers and their wording was very important. Question 2(f) also caused problems for many, as students often only provided half of the required answer.

Section B: Reading

- Q1 Gap-filling** This exercise was probably the section that differentiated most in this paper. It was a very challenging exercise as candidates were being tested on their use of prepositions, tenses, the subjunctive, adjectives and some difficult lexical items. A small number of candidates managed to score full marks but most were scoring 5 or less, with a few not managing to achieve anything in this part of the paper.
- Q2 Reading Comprehension** This enabled most candidates to do very well as they were able to copy the relevant answers from the text. Candidates' answers are only evaluated at AO2 and no manipulation of the language is needed. In terms of difficulty, Questions (c), (d), (f) and (g) were mentioned by the examiners, as candidates seemed to misunderstand the questions and often lifted chunks from the text, but failed to change the subject of the verb, resulting in responses that were illogical or incoherent. However, in general, *the spray gun* approach enables even the weakest candidates to hit on the answer.
- Q3 Summary** This new component proved to be very problematic and challenging in 2018 when it was first introduced into the new specification. However, examiners noted an improvement in the candidates' approach to the task this year. The passage was possibly more straightforward than last year's, as many were unfamiliar with the subject matter in 2018, i.e. the Spanish education system. This year's topic, Bill Gates and his attempts to solve the problems of poor countries, was arguably more accessible. Also, teachers probably benefitted from the advice given in the Chief Examiner's Report and were possibly more confident about teaching their students how to approach the task. As a result, more candidates were accessing bands 1 and 2. Still, weaker candidates continued to find the summary a challenge and whilst most strove to keep to the word limit, a small number wrote as many as 250 words. Some words, such as '*informe*' and '*advertencia*' were misunderstood by quite a few students and many were unable to relay correctly the example given in the final paragraph about the possible consequences of a 10% reduction in AIDS support.

Q4 Prose translation The prose translation has always been a section of the paper that differentiated well and this year was no exception. It was agreed at the standardising meeting that we would mark this section as positively as possible. We agreed that a sense-group that was correct except for one or two very minor errors could still access full marks. Nevertheless, many candidates scored badly here as every sense-group contained challenges that were beyond the ability of weaker students. In the first one '*cumplí los dieciocho años*' and '*empecé*' were often conveyed erroneously. In the second, the use of the preterite to convey *I was lucky*, escaped many and in the next sense-group, few candidates were able to offer anything acceptable for *stacking shelves*. In sense-group 4, unsurprisingly, the imperfect subjunctive was missed often or badly conveyed and in the next group; *As a student, having a part time job...* often elicited the gerund of the verb 'tener' rather than the infinitive. In the final group, the future '*valdrá la pena*' was badly handled, although most managed the subjunctive in '*cuando vaya a la universidad*', which they probably learned for the speaking test. As we commented last year, the overall standard in this task was encouraging and the standard will hopefully improve with the emphasis on grammar at GCSE and AS level.

Assessment Unit A2 3 Extended Writing

This was the second year of the single paper for the Extended Writing at A2. The most popular text continues to be Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Both students and teachers clearly find this an accessible and meaty text which engages them intellectually and emotionally. There are ample resources, but students can grasp the issues without too much difficulty. Most opted for (a) and more able candidates grasped that this question focused more specifically on Bernarda and they also managed to balance *reputación/felicidad* in their analysis. Some more average responses seized on the question to just list the examples of reputational issues (*el qué dirán, la honra, clase, etc.*) with only passing reference to Bernarda's concern or even awareness of the impact on her daughters. Question (b) was a more general look at the tension in the play between the two antagonistic forces at a whole series of levels. Again, this was generally well done.

Sender's *Réquiem por un campesino español* has a healthy and seemingly appreciative following. The preference was for (a) and most candidates grasped that *figura* hinted at Paco's broader significance within the novella rather than a more straightforward account of his personality and traits. These students seemed to display a good grounding in the mechanics of the story but sometimes their analyses, especially of the critique of the church and the deeper socio-political ramifications of Paco's character, were rather superficial.

Neruda's poetry attracts only a small number of centres and (b) was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the more popular choice. This produced very competent responses in most cases.

The lack of take-up for the Muñoz Molina text is disappointing but understandable as it suffers from a shortage of available resources, aside from one very good critical edition. However, for those students and teachers with an interest in contemporary Spain, this period of late Francoism and how it continues to permeate the more recent past, this is a nice text from one of Spain's most respected and lauded living writers.

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