GCSE

SPANISH

8698/WH Higher Writing
Report on the Examination

8698
November 2020

Version: 1.0

General Introduction to the November Series

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

The entry of 225 students was a very small percentage of the normal entry. The quality of the work overall was higher than in previous series and, judging by comments made by students on their personal background and on the nationality of their parents, it seems there was a relatively high number of native speakers of Spanish.

Comments on Individual Questions

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. 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 the more popular choice of the two optional questions. Most students tended to give fairly equal coverage to each of the four bullet points, although for this question marks were not affected if students wrote more about some than others.

The first two bullet points were tackled very well by the vast majority of students, who were able to write accurately about activities with friends and why they liked their best friend. Most students coped well with the preterite tense in the third bullet point, but there was more lack of clarity here when it was not known well. This often had an impact on the marks for both Content and for Quality of language. For the last task, a good number of students wrote about what they were

going to do without any reference to it being a way of celebrating their exams. However, this was still accepted as a way of accomplishing the bullet point.

Overall, despite issues with the third bullet, the language used by students was varied with some attempts at complexity, which were usually successful. The language also tended to be very accurate, with mainly minor errors.

Question 1.2

Fewer students attempted this question than those who answered question 1.1 and overall the marks were not quite as good.

For the first task, some students mentioned why they liked a certain type of film, rather than a named film, but this was accepted as fulfilling the bullet point. The second task was answered without a problem by most students, who were often able to write about their favoutite fiesta. The third bullet point proved difficult for some students, mainly because they did not realise that this was asking for something they had done in the past to help the environment or because their formation of a past tense was unsuccessful in conveying the message. As with question 1.1, this then had an adverse effect on the marks for Quality of language as well as for Content. Most students dealt well with the last task, but there were instances where *trabajo* was interpreted as 'travel'.

The marks for Quality of language overall were lower than for question 1.2, mainly because of a failure to refer successfully to a past event in the third bullet point. This brought down the maximum mark to four out of six.

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.

Question 2.1

More students answered this question than question 2.2 and the quality of the response was generally very good. Answers to the first bullet sometimes consisted mainly of positive and negative opinions towards different subjects, but these often picked out different facets and showed some imagination. Other, often better, responses dealt with different aspects of school life in some detail. Answers to the second bullet point at times omitted any reference to winning the €1000 and merely referred to what the student was going to do in the future, but this was still deemed to have accomplished the task. The requirements for both bullet points were understood in the vast majority of cases.

The language used was often impressive, both in its range and in its accuracy. There was a very good variety of vocabulary, especially when students picked out very different aspects of school life. Verb usage in the main was accurate and there were many examples of more complex language being used.

The recommended number of words for this question is 150. Sometimes students went well beyond this and, in so doing, made more errors. This had an impact on the language marks, which may have been higher had they kept closer to the recommended number of words.

Question 2.2

Fewer students answered this question and overall the marks were significantly lower than for question 2.1. The main reason for this lay in responses to the first bullet point, where attempts to describe problems with friends in the past were sometimes unclear. The second bullet point was addressed very well by most students, who were able to give clear opinions about the good and bad features of their region.

The language used in response to the second task tended to be accurate and some students were able to produce a good variety of vocabulary and more complex structures. Where marks for Range of language and for Accuracy were lower, this tended to be because of problems in responses to the first bullet point. These problems were sometimes with tense usage and sometimes because attempts were made at conveying ideas which were beyond the linguistic skills of a particular student. As with question 2.1, very long answers often included more errors, resulting in lower marks for Accuracy and/or Range of language.

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. Translations overall were extremely good and there were a good number of excellent translations which were error-free.

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

Conveying key messages

1	Last week	This was done very well.
2	I visited my brother	The main problem here was when students omitted the accent on *visité*. This was only accepted if the subject pronoun *yo* was included before the verb.
3	who lives in the town centre.	There were some errors in attempts at *vive*, but overall this was done well.
4	He studies history	This was done very well.
5	at the university.	This was done very well. *A la universidad* was quite common, but it was accepted as having conveyed the message.
6	We went to the shops	This was done very well. Sometimes *fuemos* was used, but this was considered to be a minor spelling error and was accepted.
7	because he wanted	*Quiso* and *quería* were both accepted, but this section caused a lot of problems. Common attempts which were not accepted were *querió* and *querría*.
8	to buy a new computer.	There were several acceptable ways in which students translated 'computer': *ordenador*; *computador(a)*; *portátil*. This was done very well.
9	There were	This was known well on the whole, although *hay* was used at times and was rejected. The *h* was

		sometimes omitted, but *abía* was accepted as having fulfilled the message.
10	a lot of poor people	Usually this was done well, but some used *sin techo* or *personas con no dinero*, both of which were rejected.
11	who were sleeping on the street.	There were some problems in the translation of 'who were sleeping' although the correct translations *que dormía(n)* and *que estaba(n) durmiendo* (*dormiendo* was also accepted) were common. The preterite tense was not accepted.
12	My father gave money	This was done well, although the preterite of *dar* caused problems for a good number of students.
13	to an old man.	This was done very well.

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, *fuemos*; *abía*. 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.

Concluding Remarks

In general, the demands of this paper were similar to those in previous series. As already mentioned, the marks overall were higher, but this was a reflection of the ability of the students rather than of the examination itself.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.