



GCSE

SPANISH

8698/RH: Reading Higher
Report on the Examination

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General comments.

The higher paper tests a range of skills in a variety of authentic contexts and layouts targeting grades 4-9. Students working at the higher grades will be expected to be able to deduce meaning from complex language and draw inferences in context from a range of texts that are more challenging than at foundation tier. Where appropriate, students will be asked to identify key points and specific details. The question wording is not designed to be unnecessarily challenging so as to be a barrier to student comprehension, and questions are set to be appropriate for the targeted level of demand. Sections A and B start and finish with a more accessible question but students should be aware that there are a series of peaks and troughs throughout each section so if they are having difficulties with a particular question, they should go onto the next question which may be more accessible and keep going to the end of the paper.

It was pleasing to see such high numbers of students taking this exam after very interrupted teaching. In line with Ofqual requirements, the reading exams had been through a vocabulary review to take into consideration the difficulties that the pandemic had created. As such, items of vocabulary that were not on the specification were not tested and in most cases had been removed and replaced with cognates or vocabulary from the specification. There were no new question types so the students were very familiar with the question styles. Where examples were given, on the whole students tried to follow them in their own answers. When students did not follow the example they sometimes copied out too much of the text, including information that made their answer ambiguous. Students are not expected to manipulate the language when required to answer in Spanish, although at higher tier they often do so. In Section B there were some excellent, intelligent answers to those particular questions.

Section A**Question 1**

This question was targeting the lower grades at higher tier and was a question type that students are familiar with and was there to give students a confident start to the exam. The question set out to test students' understanding of different time frames. It was well done by the vast majority of students and certainly had a higher degree of success than the same question at foundation tier.

Question 2

This text started with a low demand question (2.1) and it was done very well indeed despite being part of a longer text. It was really encouraging to see that students working at the lower grades were able to access a longer text successfully, even if they only got 1 mark. Well done! Questions 2.2 and 2.3 were of medium challenge and, as expected, were less well done. Students had to identify details and draw inferences in context so they were already working at a high level of demand. Their higher skills were being tested and 3.3 in particular differentiated well.

Question 3

Although students are very familiar with this question style at both tiers, the vocabulary and structures used to test opinions on the higher tier are more challenging than the opinion type questions at foundation tier. Students did do well on this question, showing good knowledge of the

required structures and vocabulary. Students appeared to have read to the end of each of the mini texts to confirm their answers which showed good exam technique.

Question 4

As at foundation tier, the higher paper includes two extended texts and this was the first of the two on this paper. It targeted the higher grades and was more challenging than any of the previous questions on this particular paper so far. Students had to answer in English which they do find challenging. The use of the word **exactly** in parts 1, 3 and 4 indicated that full details were needed. This requires careful reading on the part of the students and many lost a mark in part 1 by failing to include **almost** in their answer. This differentiated well.

When questions ask for the **worst/best/most important** aspect of something this often indicates that there are several answers to choose from in the text and that only one of them will be the correct one. This was the case here. Students who read the first line of paragraph 2 and wrote about temperature rising failed to notice that later in the paragraph the Spanish said '**Pero lo peor es que las lluvias serán escasas**'. Only those working at the highest levels were able to identify this detail and again the question differentiated well.

As previously mentioned, part 3 asked for precise details so '**more droughts**' was the required answer. Details were required for a mark in part 4 and there was a broad range of answers to translate *jóvenes gamberros*. The mark scheme was expanded to allow for a good range of renditions such as 'young delinquents/vandals/thugs and troublemakers' but rejected others such as 'young gangsters/offenders/criminals'.

Question 5

Back to a medium level of demand, this question was quite well done with more than half of the student entry scoring full marks on all sections showing a pleasing ability to recognise general details in a formal text.

Question 6

Students are very familiar with this question type and it operates at the highest level of demand. As previous reports have explained, students have to show understanding of both the circled answer and the question prompt and include details of both in their answer as demonstrated in the example. Many students attempted this question but did not include quite enough information for the mark. Those students who were able to give full details were rewarded for their efforts.

The preterite of the verb *traer* was well known by the better students, despite being a difficult irregular preterite. *Sillas de ruedas* was not the most challenging aspect in part 2 as might have been expected. The demand was in understanding *lo más útil*. Many students lost the mark by writing about the 'useful thing' instead of the '**most** useful thing'.

Understanding *los demás* was challenging for many students as well as the imperfect tense of *imaginar*. Students continue to translate '*benéfica*' as a 'beneficial organisation' which is disappointing. Care was needed in where to put 'a lot' in the English sentence so that it meant that Marcos **really** fancied working abroad rather than wanted to work abroad **a lot**.

Well done to those students who were able to cope with the demands of this question.

Question 7

This was the first of the two literature texts and the first text to include some vocabulary outside of the specification. This was shown by the use of an asterisk by the word in the text and also by the English meaning of the word which was written at the end of the text. This was a question style that was relatively new at this level of demand. It requires students to read and re-read the text, scan and then cross check for meaning. This is quite demanding and students did really well on all parts of the question.

Question 8

This question targeted a lower level of demand than the previous question and was a more familiar question style. T/F/NM questions are not as easy as they first appear and students do have to check and verify their understanding before they decide on an answer. Students did really, really well on this question apart from in part 4 where they were perhaps perplexed by the word *rato*.

Question 9

Question 9 was another overlap question, accessible to those students who may have been finding the high demand questions very challenging. As expected, higher tier students performed better than those at foundation had done.

Students were shown an example of how to answer the questions and how much information to include. Those who did follow the example performed better than those who wrote only one word answers such as 'impossible'/'easy'/'fast'. Some students followed the example too closely in part one and many wrote 'impossible to use' – changing the adjective but not changing the verb. The mark scheme was expanded to credit 'figure out' or 'work out' as alternatives to 'understand'. In part two the mark scheme was again expanded to include 'watch' as well as 'see' although it did not make much sense to 'watch' the numbers on a smartphone. The mark scheme originally focussed on one of the advantages of the battery, but many students included the fact that there was a high volume as well as a fast charging battery, so they were rewarded with the mark for their more detailed answer.

There was a very high degree of success in parts 2 and 3 which was a good way for many students to finish section A.

Section B**Question 10**

This question was of medium demand and differentiated well between those who were working at this level. Students were required to use higher order skills to deduce meaning from more complex vocabulary and structures.

Question 11

This question was the second literature text and was also an overlap question so appeared at foundation tiers well. All parts of this question were well done at higher tier.

Question 12

Students' performance was better than expected on this question. The context was challenging. Vocabulary such as *estar harto de* and *quejarse* are not normally well known but more than half of the student entry understood them correctly. It was really pleasing to see such a high rate of success.

Question 13

This question targeted the higher grades so was designed to challenge the most able students. It takes time to read the options and understand the sentence where the gap is. At this stage in the paper students may be waning but it is definitely worth attempting this question because almost half of the student entry got all three parts correct.

Question 14

This was the last question in Section B and the final overlap question. As such, the question is of low demand for students at this tier and, as expected, higher tier students performed better on it than those at foundation tier. However, poor spelling and copying too much from the text often resulted in students losing a mark as ambiguities were introduced into their answers. Students at higher tier will often manipulate the language in the text when producing their answers. Whilst this is not necessary some excellent examples of this were seen, for example in 14.2 'que cambien las reglas'. Providing their response showed the level of understanding required students were credited for this technique.

Section C Translation

The mean mark for the translation increased this year and there were some very good translations, especially of the last three sentences. It is so very pleasing to see how many students do the translation which comes at the end of a very long paper. There were hardly any unattempted translations. Teachers have trained their students well. From markings on the scripts it is clear that students break the text into small chunks so that they can have a go at each little part. They do well and a considerable number of students got 3 or more marks on the translation this year.

Yo estaba escuchando un podcast sobre mi actor favorito – only the strongest students understood the imperfect continuous.

y no sabía que – students should translate every word – including link words. Unfortunately 'Y' was missed by some students.

él ganó su primer premio de cine con solo 9 años – some students lost a mark for writing about 'film premiers' rather than film prizes'.

El sábado va a salir en la tele – a few clumsy mistakes here where students did not know *sábado*. Many wrote about 'coming out on the TV' which changed the meaning significantly. Literal translations will only be accepted if they convey the same message and meaning.

para que sus aficionados puedan hacerle preguntas – was the most demanding section and as such was not very well done. *Para que* was not widely recognised. It differentiated well.

Tendré que ver lo que dice – was also intended to be challenging and it differentiated well.

The last three sentences were targeting the lower grades and were well done on the whole.

¿Te gustaría ser famoso? Some students do not know the difference between *te gusta* and *te gustaría* which is a pity.

No me interesa – was well done.

Las redes sociales son a veces crueles – was well done but those who did not mention ‘sometimes’ lost a mark.

Advice to students

- Read the introduction to the question. This will help you to give appropriate answers.
- Make sure that your letters are clearly written when you are answering with a letter.
- Use the correct set of letters, eg, (P, N or P+N) (T,F, NM) or (P,N,F).
- Read forwards and backwards in a text from the key word in the question. Sometimes the answer comes after the key word and sometimes it comes before.
- Do not copy whole chunks of Spanish because you might include the wrong answer as well as the right answer and so you will not score the mark.
- If you are asked to give one reason, only give one.
- In the questionnaire type question (Q6), include in your answer the information from the answer and the question in the questionnaire. Be guided by the answer given in the example.
- Translate every word in the translation.

Advice to teachers

- Continue to bear in mind that the Higher Reading examination tests up to Grades 7, 8 and 9 and that 30 of the 60 available marks will test those grades.
- Train students to spot distractors and practise this in class.
- Draw attention to the list of important verbs in the specification and make sure your students are familiar with them.
- Encourage your students to use capital letters when answering with a letter and to make them legible even if they change their answer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.