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GCSE

**SPANISH**

8698/SF: Speaking Foundation  
Report on the Examination

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## General comments

As always, there was a wide range in the standard of work produced by students. However, after such a turbulent time and all the disruption caused to students' education, overall the quality of work was encouraging. This is down to the hard work of students, but also to the dedication of so many teachers in the preparation of those students. This was seen most clearly in generally good marks achieved in the photo card and, especially, in the role-play. Practice with past examination papers had clearly prepared students very well for these parts of the test.

The general conversation was regularly not as strong as the role-play and photo card, but there were still some excellent conversations for this tier. These conversations showed good interaction between student and teacher. However, there were occasions when this was not the case and where students found it a challenge to maintain a conversation. This may, in part, have been caused by the amount of lesson time lost during the past two years and the inevitable reduction in oral work experienced by this year's students. Despite all the difficulties faced, the standard overall was good.

Correct conduct of the test by teachers is crucial and by and large this was good. However, there were issues which adversely affected students' marks. Poor timing, especially of the general conversation, sometimes led to a loss of marks. For the role-play, teachers sometimes strayed from their script and this meant that the answer given by a student for that task could not be credited. In the photo card, teachers are allowed to paraphrase the question, but sometimes the alternative version used was not a paraphrase. Examples are given in the photo card section.

Examiners had to use a Speaking Scoresheet in order to arrive at fair and consistent marks for all students. A copy of this can be found at the back of the mark scheme.

## Role-plays

Teachers should keep to the script of the role-play because failure to do so will result in a student's response to a particular task being discounted. It is not acceptable to repeat part of a prompt. For example, in role-play 4, the unexpected question was *¿Cuántas semanas va a pasar aquí en España?* If a student did not understand the question, it was fine for the teacher to repeat the full question. However, it was not acceptable for the teacher simply to repeat the key question word *¿cuántas?* Had this type of change to the prompt been accepted, it would have provided an unfair advantage to those students because it made the task easier. So, as always, teachers are reminded that they must keep to their script.

If students prepared effectively in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have had notes which they could read out once they moved on to the next task. Disappointingly it sometimes seemed that students were not doing that or that they had not made notes. It is worth reminding and encouraging students to use these notes during the test.

At this tier, there is no need to use any tense other than present in the role-play. Some tasks will still be fulfilled if a past or future reference is made, but it should be discouraged because errors resulting in a loss of marks are often made when other tenses are attempted needlessly.

The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero marks per task.

The mark for Knowledge and use of language usually corresponded with the mark for Communication. For example, 8 for Communication would usually result in a mark of 4 for Knowledge and use of language.

Teachers are encouraged not to use English during the course of the test. The mark scheme says: 'If, in any part of the test, the teacher either asks a question or gives a prompt **in English**, you must ignore the student's reply'. In the role-play, it is acceptable for the teacher to prompt the question task by saying to the student: *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?* or something similar in Spanish. However, if the teacher asks in English 'Have you got a question?', whatever the student says will score zero, as clearly stated in the mark scheme. It was not uncommon for that to happen.

There follows more detailed comment on each of the role-plays:

### **Role-play 1**

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

Giving opinions is something that students are generally proficient at.

Task c

Although this was the unexpected task, students coped well with it. In order to score two marks, a verb was not required, but most used *me gusta* plus a noun or verb.

Task d

Question words were often not well known and this was the case here with *cuándo*.

Task e

The question task often causes problems, but this one was done well on the whole. One of the most common questions was *¿Te gusta tu familia?*

### **Role-play 2**

Task a

As with task d in Role-play 1, *cuándo* caused problems.

Task b

Well done by the majority.

Task c

*¿Quién?* was another question word that caused considerable problems.

Task d

Emails are clearly not popular with many young people and *Es aburrido* was a common answer.

**Task e**

This question task was done quite well, although some lost one of the two marks by omitting any reference to Bolivia.

**Role-play 3****Task a**

The expected response was something like *¿Qué deportes hay en el polideportivo?*, but that type of question was rare. The more successful attempts related to a specific sport, for example: *¿Hay tenis en el polideportivo?* The pronunciation of *polideportivo* was often poor and lost at least one mark.

**Task b**

This was one of the more successful unexpected tasks.

**Task c**

Misunderstanding of the word *cuándo* again caused problems.

**Task d**

The preference between team sports and individual sports was done well. Some students tried to give reasons that were beyond their linguistic capabilities and these sometimes failed to communicate.

**Task e**

This was done well.

**Role-play 4****Task a**

*Regalo* was not at all well known and so this task proved challenging for many.

**Task b**

This was done well, although the pronunciation of *azul* and *rojo* sometimes was unclear and lost a mark.

**Task c**

Surprisingly few students knew *¿Cuánto es?* The most common two-mark answer was *¿Qué es el precio?*

**Task d**

Another opinion-giving task that was done well.

**Task e**

Many students did not know *¿Cuántas?*

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### Role-play 5

#### Task a

As with task a in Role-play 3, the expected question *¿Qué sitios de interés (turístico) hay?* was rare and students regularly were unsuccessful in formulating a question.

#### Task b

This was well done.

#### Task c

Done well by most students who had this role-play, although the poor pronunciation of *autobús* sometimes lost a mark.

#### Task d

The most common successful answer was one which used *me gusta/me gustaría* followed by a noun or verb.

#### Task e

*Día* was sometimes not known. When it was, this task was done well, particularly because a verb was not required in order to score two marks.

### Role-play 6

#### Task a

*Cuántas* again caused problems, even though this task was a prepared one.

#### Task b

*Dónde* is a better-known question word, but a surprising number still did not understand it.

#### Task c

There were many types of successful answers here, such as: *Mi dieta es sana; como mucha fruta; me gusta la comida basura; bebo dos litros de agua todos los días.*

#### Task d

This was done well.

#### Task e

Some students asked the question *¿Tienes malos hábitos?*, but more common two-mark questions were things like *¿Te gusta fumar?* and *¿Cuál/qué es tu opinión de alcohol?* However, this task was generally done quite badly.

### Role-play 7

#### Task a

*¿Cuántos?* again was often not known. Any number was accepted for two marks, as was *muchos*.

#### Task b

This was done well

**Task c**

Again, this opinion-giving task was very successful.

**Task d**

Overall this task was not done well. Sometimes it appeared that students did not understand *recreo*; on other occasions, the pronunciation of *recreo* was poor and at least one mark was lost because of a delay in comprehension.

**Task e**

This was done well. Benefit of doubt was given when students said that they went to places such as a shopping centre or McDonald's during their lunch break. Some may, some may not have misunderstood the prompt. In either case, they were awarded marks according to how clearly they communicated the information.

**Role-play 8****Task a**

This was done well.

**Task b**

In this task and in task d, and also task a in Role-play 9, many students appeared not to know what *aspecto* meant. It is such a close cognate that it must be assumed that the word 'aspect' is not widely understood in English.

**Task c**

Once again, *cuántas* was not understood by many.

**Task d**

As mentioned in task b, *aspecto* did cause some problems, but here the word *positivo* encouraged students to use an adjective such as *divertido* or even *emocionante* and they were accepted.

**Task e**

This was done quite well with the most common question being *¿Te gusta(n) los profesores?*

**Role-play 9****Task a**

For students who understood the prompt, the most popular answer was *dinero*.

**Task b**

This was done very well.

**Task c**

Another opinion-giving task that was very successful.

**Task d**

This was one of the more successful unexpected tasks.

**Task e**

The main problem here was with the pronunciation of *jefe*.

**Photo cards**

It was pleasing to see that many teachers had prepared their students very well for this part of the exam. They had clearly read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme, which deals with the marking of the photo card, and passed this information on successfully to their students. Any teachers who are not fully aware of how the photo card is marked are strongly recommended to read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme and to look at the examples that are given for the award of different marks.

Teachers are allowed to paraphrase the questions in this part of the exam, but the same meaning must be maintained, or the student's answer is not credited. For example, the second question on Photo card C was *¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre los videojuegos?* If a teacher paraphrased by asking *¿Qué piensas de los videojuegos?*, this was fine because exactly the same meaning was maintained. However, *¿Te gustan los videojuegos?* was not allowed because it is not a paraphrase – it can be answered by *Sí* or *No*, which the aforementioned two questions cannot. In addition, extra words such as *en el futuro* or *actividades* cannot be added to the printed questions, nor can words be repeated within the question, for example in the fourth question on Photo card B: *¿Cuándo te gusta escuchar música ... cuándo?*

Questions discriminated well, with a wide range in the quality of answers, but there were some that were done noticeably less well than others. These were the ones which students found most challenging:

**Photo card C**

*¿Qué te gustaría comprar en Internet? ... ¿Por qué?*

This was a prepared question, but students often could not answer it.

**Photo card D**

*¿Qué habitación de tu casa prefieres? ... ¿Por qué?*

*Habitación* was not at all well known.

**Photo card E**

*¿Qué prefieren hacer tus amigos durante las vacaciones?*

Third person verbs were quite rare. However, many students got around this by saying things like: *Prefiero ir a Gales con mis amigos*. This may or may not have been deliberate, but it worked.

**Photo card F**

*¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre las personas que no reciclan?*

Maybe because this was an unexpected question, students frequently could not come up with an answer such as: *no me gustan; son malos; son perezosos*.



## Photo card G

*¿Qué compras con el dinero que recibes?*

Students regularly could not find an answer to this question.

## General conversation

As a general rule, students tended to do less well in the general conversation than they had done in the role-play and photo card. This was the opposite to what happened in 2019. Why this was the case can only be a matter for supposition. However, it may be that during time away from school, it was more straightforward for students to be given work which practised how to tackle the role-play and photo card than it was to practise the general conversation.

The feel of the general conversation differed between teachers and students. Sometimes there was good interaction between the two, whereas at other times there was little interaction and the conversation took the form of a list of, often unconnected, questions. A happy medium often produced the best results, allowing for extended responses while at the same time maintaining an air of spontaneity.

The required length of the general conversation is between three and five minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of one and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher says 'End of test'.

The other time that a penalty of one mark for Communication is applied is if the student does not ask an understandable question of the teacher. It is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, the maximum time may have been reached and the question is therefore too late to be credited. In this part of the exam, a student can be credited with asking the question by saying *¿Y tú?* if it is asked appropriately. For example, when asked, *¿Adónde vas de vacaciones?*, the reply is *Voy a Francia. ¿Y tú?* However, if the teacher prompts a question by asking *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?*, merely to say *¿Y tú?* would not count as an appropriate question.

## Advice to teachers

### General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students should not have access to their mobile during the preparation time or during the exam, in accordance with examination regulations.

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- Make sure that you read the *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document. It is essential that you follow the instructions in that document.
  - In the Instructions document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every candidate:

GCSE Spanish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number \_\_\_\_, candidate number \_\_\_\_, candidate name \_\_\_\_. Role-play number \_\_\_\_, photo card letter \_\_\_\_, general conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).

- Everything said by the teacher must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to the Irregularities Team at AQA, as will instances where it sounds as though something is being written down.
- Use Spanish throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her role-play and photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the general conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible. It can be a good use of the Foreign Language Assistant's time, if you have one.

### **Role-play**

- Keep to your script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in a task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

### **Photo card**

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the two-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

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## General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesante* or *aburrido* and there are other ways to say *me gusta*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *divertido*, *impresionante*, *maravilloso*, *estupendo*, *antipático*; and verbs such as *me encanta*, *me interesa*, *lo encuentro ...*, *odio*, *me molesta*.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Spanish: *Ahora vamos a pasar al tema número uno*, etc.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the general conversation is five minutes. Everything after that will **not** be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they don't do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you don't forget to do it later on.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

## Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three questions on the photo card.
- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card and to all questions in the general conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words such as *¿cuándo?*, *¿cuántos?*, *¿dónde?*, *¿quién?*, *¿cómo?* and *¿qué?*
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Spanish. You can say *Repíte, por favor* or *¿Cómo?*, for example.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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