



GCSE

SPANISH

8698/SH: Speaking Higher
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Overall, the role-play at Higher tier was done very well indeed. Students had clearly been prepared very well, despite the restrictions and disruption caused by covid. Great credit for this goes to the students themselves and also to the hard work and skill of their teachers. The same can be said of the photo cards.

Occasionally, students performed badly in the general conversation and, for the Speaking exam at least, it appeared they may have been better suited to entry at Foundation tier. However, the majority performed very well in that part of the test.

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.

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. Unfortunately it was not uncommon for that to happen,

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 12, the unexpected question was *¿Cuántas veces a la semana sales con amigos?* 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 there are two parts to a question in the teacher's script, it is advisable to ask the first question, wait for the answer, and then ask the second question. For example, the unpredictable task in Role-play 15 is: *¿Cuál es su nacionalidad? ... ¿Dónde está su hotel en España?* Some teachers asked both parts of such a task at the same time and, almost invariably, students requested a repetition.

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. They should be encouraged to use these notes during the test. Sometimes it seemed that they were not doing that or that they had not made notes.

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.

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

Role-play 10

Task a
Very well done.

Task b
The topic of this unexpected question was one that students dealt well with in the speaking test. They were also very good at giving opinions. For those reasons, this was a successful task for the vast majority who did this role-play.

Task c
Very well done.

Task d
Students seemed to have used their preparation time well and came up with good responses.

Task e
This question-asking task caused problems for all but the best students. The ones who were successful asked questions such as: *¿Cuáles/qué son los peligros de Internet?*; *¿Internet es peligrosa?*

Role-play 11

Task a
Very well done.

Task b
Very well done.

Task c
This unexpected task could get full marks without a verb being used. The first question was handled well by most students and they were able to give a type of film that they preferred. However, many did not understand *¿cuántas veces?*

Task d
This was well done and showed that most students were confident in their use of the preterite tense. If the present tense was used, one mark was awarded.

Task e

Most students gained two marks here by asking *¿Te gusta la televisión en México?*

Role-play 12

Task a

Very well done.

Task b

¿Cuántas veces? in the first question caused many problems, as it did in task c of Role-play 11.

Task c

There were no particular issues with this task and most students did well on it.

Task d

It was encouraging to see how confidently most students handled the preterite tense.

Task e

Very well done.

Role-play 13

Task a

This was done well and students found different ways to answer, along the lines of: *Comen mucha fruta y verduras; tienen una vida sana y juegan deporte; su vida es sana y van al gimnasio.*

Task b

Well done, provided the preterite was used, rather than the present tense.

Task c

¿Cuántas veces? again proved troublesome for many.

Task d

Very well done.

Task e

Generally done well, with the most common question being: *¿Tu vida es sana?*

Role-play 14

Task a

It was unusual to see students who got two marks for this task because most did not use a past tense.

Task b

Most successfully conveyed the problem with the room, but many forgot to give the room number.

Task c
Very well done.

Task d
Well done, with the most common two-mark question being: *¿Te gusta la comida en el (restaurante del) hotel?*

Task e
Any tense was allowed for this question and students did well as a result.

Role-play 15

Task a
This was not done well. Again it often seemed to be because the student did not understand *cuántas*.

Task b
Both questions were answered well, particularly the one about nationality.

Task c
Sometimes students lost marks because the details that they gave did not relate to when and/or with whom they went.

Task d
Very well done.

Task e
This caused considerable difficulty. Those who asked *¿Qué/cuál es tu/su recomendación para otro museo?* tended to be most successful.

Role-play 16

Task a
Any planned future event was accepted and this was done very well.

Task b
Very well done. Many gave a positive opinion such as *es divertido* and scored two marks.

Task c
This was generally well done, with adjectives such as *difícil*, *caro* and *aburrido* being the most common.

Task d
Well done for the most part.

Task e
This was done well. It was pleasing to see that *país* was better understood than it has been previously.

Role-play 17

Task a

Very well done. *Hace sol y calor* was a common two-mark answer.

Task b

The question about what kind of job was answered well, but in the second question, *¿cuánto tiempo?* was not well known.

Task c

This proved to be one of the trickier past tense tasks.

Task d

Very well done.

Task e

Generally well done. Again, those who began with *¿Qué/Cuál es ...?* completed the task in the most straightforward way.

Role-play 18

Task a

Very well done. It was pleasing to see that the vast majority picked up on the word *mejor* and made positive comments.

Task b

Very well done.

Task c

Again, the preterite was used successfully on the whole.

Task d

There were lots of positive comments about language learning and this task was done well.

Task e

Well done for the most part. The most popular question was *¿Te gusta(n) los deberes en Chile?*

Photo cards

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 fifth question on Photo card Q was *¿Qué regla te gustaría cambiar en tu instituto? ... ¿Por qué?* If a teacher

paraphrased by asking *¿Qué norma te gustaría cambiar en tu colegio? ... ¿Por qué?*, this was fine because exactly the same meaning was maintained. However, *¿Qué regla no te gusta en tu colegio?* was not allowed because it is not a paraphrase and the question is a much easier one for the student to understand. 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 third question on Photo card J: *¿Quién es tu mejor amigo o amiga ... quién?*

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 K

¿Crees que la televisión es popular entre los jóvenes? ... ¿Por qué (no)?

Sí or *no* was often produced quickly by students, suggesting that they understood the question. However, a reason was sometimes not given, even though something simple like *es aburrido* or *es interesante* would have worked.

Photo card M

¿Cómo ha cambiado tu región en los últimos años?

Although this was a prepared question, many students struggled to find a suitable answer.

Photo card N

Háblame de un sitio de interés que visitaste en el pasado.

The main problem here seemed to be understanding of the word *sitio*. Those who understood the question tended to cope well with past tenses in their answer.

Photo card O

¿Qué podrías hacer para ayudar a los sin techo?

The topic of homelessness is one that is often covered by teachers in the general conversation and many students seem very conversant with that topic. However, this question proved very difficult, even though it was a prepared question.

Photo card P

Para ti, ¿cuáles son los aspectos más importantes en un trabajo? ... ¿Por qué?

Possibly, the word *aspectos* was not known by students, even though it is a near cognate.

Photo card Q

¿Crees que los deberes te ayudan con los exámenes? ... ¿Por qué (no)?

This was a prepared question, but some students struggled to provide an appropriate answer.

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. Some of the conversations were excellent from the point of view of all criteria for assessment. There were others where the students may not have been the most accurate speakers of Spanish, but who scored highly for pronunciation and intonation and for spontaneity and fluency. This was because they had clearly been taught well from the point of view of pronunciation, but also because of a balanced performance in the general conversation.

The required length of the general conversation is between five and seven minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of two 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.
- 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.

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 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the general conversation is seven 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.