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GCSE

**SPANISH**

8698/WF: Writing Foundation  
Report on the Examination

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8698  
June 2022

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Version: 1.0

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## General comments

The examination discriminated well and there was a wide range of performance within questions and over the paper as a whole. The increase in optionality in Question 4 was introduced to compensate in some way for the lack of teaching time during lockdown and disruption in schooling since then. There was still a slight fall in the mean mark, but this was to be expected in the circumstances.

The questions on the paper are targeted at different levels of demand and the vast majority of students were able to score marks in Question 1 and Question 2. As they are designed to do, Questions 3 and 4 discriminated much more and there were many more low-scoring answers in those questions. There were some excellent answers in Question 4, although there seemed to be fewer of those than in 2019. This is almost certainly a result of the educational challenges many students have experienced over the past two years.

One thing which was very noticeable this year was the increased frequency of barely legible handwriting. If an examiner was unable to read properly what a student had written, no credit could be given. This was a particular problem when it came to verb endings.

## Question 1

Students had to write four sentences about the photo and each sentence was worth a maximum of two marks. A conjugated verb was needed in order to score two marks. If the verb was omitted, or if an inappropriate infinitive was used, the maximum mark was one. The sentences could be very simple and repetitive in structure and score two marks each time. For example, *hay* + an understandable noun could be used four times and get two marks on each occasion. The most common nouns which students used in connection with the photo were *personas*, *mujer*, *hombre*, *chico*, *chica*, *padre*, *madre*, *familia*, *mesa*, *parque*, *agua*. Two common errors were *mejor* for *mujer* and *jacketa* for *chaqueta*, neither of which was credited.

Students were given credit if they imagined that they were in the photo and used the first person of the verb, for example: *Hablo con mis padres*. However, use of the second person of the verb was awarded a mark of zero.

The whole of the sentence is assessed. So, if the student wrote *Hay un hombre y una mejor*, only one mark was given because the second part of the sentence makes no sense. *Hay un hombre* alone would have scored two marks.

## Advice to students

- Include a simple verb in each sentence.
- Keep each sentence short.
- Choose the items in the photo that you are most sure that you know the Spanish for.

## Question 2

In this question there were 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students were required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet

points were compulsory and had to be covered, but there was no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

### Content

In order to score in the top band for Content, students had to give clear information in relation to all four bullet points. Pleasingly, there was no widespread misunderstanding of any of the bullet points: *música*; *cine*; *deportes*; *televisión*. The majority of students were therefore able to write something about each one. The mark awarded for Content was then based on how clearly that information had been conveyed. Incorrect grammar and spelling had a negative impact on clarity.

Students who exceeded the recommended number of 40 words often lost marks because some of the extra information contained incorrect language which made the intended messages unclear.

### Quality of language

In order to score well for Quality of language, students had to show a variety of structures, but there is no requirement for complexity of language in this question. It is perfectly acceptable, and in fact advisable, to present information using the present tense. Using different verbs and adjectives when giving opinions was the main way in which students were able to vary the language they used.

Those students who wrote considerably more than the recommended 40 words usually made more errors and this was a contributory factor in the award of a lower mark.

### Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly ten words per bullet point. If you can write a little more on one and a little less on another, that is acceptable. However, try to keep to approximately 40 words in total.
- Mention all the of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them, rather than leaving them out. If you miss out a bullet point entirely, you automatically lose two marks for Content.
- Tick off each bullet point on the question paper once you have covered it.

### Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering Grades 1 to 5, the question differentiated well with nearly all students able to score some marks.

The sentences were divided into 12 key messages, as in the table below.

I have	Although <i>tengo</i> is an irregular verb form, it was very well known by students.
a small garden.	The main problems here were the use of <i>poco</i> for <i>pequeño</i> ; and the spelling of <i>jardín</i> , which often began with a 'g'.
I don't like	This proved to be the most accessible of all the key messages.
to do homework.	<i>Deberes</i> without the verb was not credited and a lot of students failed to convey this message for that reason.
Yesterday	<i>Ayer</i> was fairly well known.

I ate	First person regular verbs in the preterite have an accent, but missing it off does not produce a word that means something else. <i>So comi</i> was accepted.
chicken and salad.	This was done quite well, but spelling errors could prevent the message being conveyed. The common spelling mistakes here were <i>polo</i> for <i>pollo</i> and <i>salada</i> for <i>ensalada</i> . Because both words mean something different, no credit was given for either.
I am doing to work	This was done well and students were generally very comfortable with the formation of the immediate future.
in a sports centre.	<i>Polideportivo</i> was often misspelt, but often it was a minor misspelling that had no impact on communication.
My sister wants	This section was targeted at higher grades and so it was no surprise that <i>quiere</i> proved very challenging.
to visit the south of Spain	<i>Sur</i> was known by few students. <i>Suerte</i> appeared a lot.
in January.	<i>Enero</i> was not too well known and <i>julio</i> was quite common.

### Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There was usually a direct correlation between the mark for Key messages and the mark for Application of grammar. However, this was sometimes lower, if the student had been allowed several key messages in spite of poor grammar and/or spelling; or higher, if the mark for Key messages had been lowered by several relatively minor errors.

### Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases.
- Check carefully that you do not miss out any parts of the translation by accident.
- If you are not sure how to translate something, have a go as it may score you a mark. Leaving it blank will not.
- Check verb tenses and endings.

### Question 4

For this question, there were 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students were required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points had to be covered, but there was no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

Students were able to achieve full marks by writing in the region of 90 words. Many did this, but others lost marks for Content because they wrote around half that amount. Others wrote too much and made more errors in so doing. This affected the mark for Quality of language and also the mark for Content, when the language became unclear.

At this tier, it was usually the students who wrote concisely and accurately who scored the highest marks.

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## Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, the amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no challengingly in developing ideas and expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’ in the criteria) and this had an impact on marks awarded. Therefore, students who conveyed information in relation to all four bullet points did not necessarily score a mark of 9 or 10. Lapses in clarity may have been sufficient in number to mean that a mark lower than 9 was more appropriate. In order to score in the top band for Content, the criteria state that ‘a lot of information is conveyed’. The recommended number of words is 90, so a student who writes approximately that number of words, and who writes clearly, will have access to full marks. This is deemed to be ‘a lot of information’ for this question.

### Question 4.1

Each of the three optional questions was based on one of the three themes in the specification. The bullet points in this question were all concerned with theme 1, Identity and culture, although there was no requirement for students to keep to the specified topics for theme 1 if what they wrote was relevant to a bullet point. For example, the first bullet was: *qué hiciste con tu familia durante un día divertido en el pasado*. Many students wrote about something they had done on holiday with their family. Holidays is theme 2, but the students’ response still fulfilled the bullet point. There were no widespread misunderstandings of what was expected of any of the bullet points and the vast majority tackled all of them. For the final bullet point, it was sufficient to express an opinion on either wanting to visit or not wanting to visit a festival in Spain. There was no need to identify a specific festival, although the most popular one that was mentioned was La Tomatina.

### Question 4.2

This question concerned topics from Theme 2, Local, national, international and global areas of interest. The first two bullet points were handled well, with students often writing with some confidence about a past holiday and about where they live. For the third task, which asked students what they do to protect the environment, some did not fulfil the task because they wrote generally about environmental problems in their area, without covering what they do to protect the environment. The final bullet point asked students if they would like to do voluntary work in the future. Most fulfilled the requirements of the task by changing the object pronoun in the prompt and wrote: *Me gustaría hacer trabajo voluntario en el futuro*. Some failed to convey the correct information because they retained the second person pronoun in the prompt and therefore gave the wrong message.

### Question 4.3

The first two tasks, giving an opinion on studies and what you do during the lunch break, were done well, especially the former. The final bullet point was also addressed successfully by most students and they were able to explain why they would or would not like to be a teacher. The third task was: *qué hiciste en tu última clase de español*. This proved to be much more challenging and

it was often misunderstood. Many students gave an opinion of studying Spanish and made no reference to their last Spanish class. Some picked up on *última clase* and made reference to their last ever Spanish class, some time in the future. This could not be accepted because the verb in the prompt made it clear that the reference had to be to a lesson in the past.

### Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy.

Each of the bullet points for both questions required students to use a variety of vocabulary because of the different nature of each task. Each one allowed students to choose language which they could use confidently.

In order to score in the top band for Quality of language, there had to be successful reference to events in the present, past and future. One task in each of 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 required the student to refer to a future event and another one to a past event. As far as the future events were concerned, each one asked whether the student would like to do something in the future and each prompt began: *si te gustaría...* The majority of students were able to change the object pronoun and begin their response to this task by writing *me gustaría* plus an infinitive. The past event task was done quite well in 4.1 and 4.2, but, as previously mentioned, the one in 4.3 was done less well because students often misinterpreted the prompt.

Complexity at this tier was achieved through the use of subordinate clauses; infinitive constructions; longer sentences formed by using connectives; negatives; the use of *lo* in phrases such as *lo bueno/malo es que*.

As far as variety of language was concerned, it was encouraging to see how many students enriched their writing by using idiomatic phrases such as: *es pan comido*; *somos uña y carne*; *que yo sepa*. This is to be encouraged, provided such phrases are used sparingly and in an appropriate context.

The other strand in Quality of language is the accuracy of the writing. The more common, major errors were with verbs, either with the wrong person or the wrong tense of the verb. Poor tense formation was also an issue for many students, in particular with the preterite being used instead of the present tense and vice versa. At this tier there were a high number of minor errors, which cumulatively contributed to a lower mark for Quality of language. Sometimes poor spelling also had an effect, sometimes when the word was in the prompt, such as *divertido* and *proteger*. As mentioned above, poor handwriting often made it impossible to tell with any certainty how a word was spelt.

### Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words.
- Mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points on the question paper once they have been covered.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- Make sure you include opinions as required by the task.

- In some cases, the language of the bullet points can be used as part of your response. For
- example, in Question 4.2, the first bullet point is: *qué hiciste recientemente para ganar dinero*. You are given an ideal start to a sentence: *Recientemente, para ganar dinero,...* If you do this, make sure the spelling is accurate.
- Write clearly, so that the examiner can read exactly what you have written.



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

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