



GCSE

SPANISH

8698/WH: Writing Higher
Report on the Examination

8698
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

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 1 and in Question 2 should have compensated in some way for the lack of teaching time during lockdown and disruption in schooling since then. There was still a fall in the mean mark, but this was to be expected in the circumstances. There seemed to be fewer excellent answers in Question 2 compared to 2019. This is likely to be a result of the educational challenges many students have experienced over the past two years. Question 2 discriminated much more than the other two questions.

One thing which was very noticeable this year was the increased frequency of very poor 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

The same strengths and weaknesses applied at Higher tier as at Foundation, although the overall standard of the responses was much better, as was to be expected.

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. Encouragingly, 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.

Question 1.1

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 1.2

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 including 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 1.3

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 the vast majority of 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 difficult for some and it was sometimes misunderstood. A good number of 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. In relation to the first three elements, the following were seen: successful references to two or three time frames; different persons of the verb; synonyms, especially when giving opinions: *me gusta, me encanta, me chifla, me flipa; me mola*; structures reflecting complexity were often successfully attempted, for example: infinitive constructions, adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and even subjunctives.

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 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 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 saying *me gustaría* plus an infinitive. The past event task was done well in 1.1 and 1.2, but, as previously mentioned, the one in 1.3 was done less well because students sometimes misinterpreted the prompt.

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. If there was a high number of minor errors, this 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.

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. It was pleasing to see that many students produced a good amount of content, whichever question they chose.

The quality of work varied enormously but, reassuringly, the overwhelming majority of students had been entered for the correct tier and there were some excellent responses, although not as many as in 2019.

Content

Many students exceeded the recommended 150 words and some wrote upwards of 500. This usually resulted in more errors being made which could then have a derogatory effect on the marks awarded for Content, if mistakes were ones that affected communication. The reference to 'a lot of information' in the criteria for assessment is in connection to the recommended number of words. So, a response of around 150 words, where information is clearly conveyed, can get full marks for Content.

Question 2.1

Both bullet points were addressed successfully by most students. The main problem, which was fortunately not seen very often, was that some students wrote about the positive and negative effects of social media without making any reference to relationships with friends. However, apart from that, responses usually were successful in conveying the required information.

Question 2.2

The first task was addressed successfully by the vast majority of students, who were able to state clearly whether or not it is important to live in a big city in order to be happy.

The second task was less well done and many found it difficult to convey consistently clear information about how they helped someone in the past. More often than not, there was a mix of clear and unclear information, so that at least the bullet point was fulfilled.

Question 2.3

This was the least popular of the three optional questions. The first task was usually answered in some depth, with a range of problems being identified. Many tended to give positive opinions of school as well, but generally this was done in such a way that relevance was maintained. For example: *A pesar de estos problemas, también hay muchos aspectos positivos del colegio, así que en general me gusta*. Students would then go on to include what some of these positive aspects were.

Quite often it appeared that students did not understand what the word *aprendiz* meant in the second task. The bullet point was not fulfilled where students wrote what they would like to do as a job in the future, without reference to wanting or not wanting to be an apprentice.

Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and an ability to produce complex sentences confidently. Reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but the use of these would be considered to be attempts at complexity. In terms of variety

of language, many students were able to produce a good range of connectives: *porque*, *ya que*, *dado que*, *así que*. Many students extended their sentences and added to the complexity of the language by using subordinate clauses introduced by words such as *que*, *cuando* and *donde*. Infinitive constructions were used confidently by most students, although there were those who found them challenging and would, for example, follow *gustar* with a conjugated verb. Successful use of object pronouns was less common, but they added precision to the writing when they were used well. Although only two time frames were targeted in each of the questions, many students used a wide range of tenses as they developed their response. There were also examples of good use of the subjunctive. As at Foundation tier, a good range of idiomatic phrases was evident and these were usually used in the correct context.

Accuracy

In order to score two marks for Accuracy, the writing must be ‘more accurate than inaccurate’. A good number of students scored this mark because the language was only just worthy of that criterion and so could not be a higher one. The criteria refer to verb and tense formations and how correct these are. Although there was some excellent work as far as verb usage was concerned, there were also examples of very poor usage, even at this tier. This tended to happen most in the second task of Question 2.2. Where students’ use of verbs was poor, there was a detrimental effect in all areas of the criteria and it could also have a bearing on the mark for Content, if the information conveyed was unclear. There are references in the criteria to major and minor errors. A major error is one that impairs communication, whereas a minor error does not have a bearing on communication, such as incorrect adjectival agreement or gender.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required.
- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response.
- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.
- If you have time at the end of the exam, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.
- Try not to write things that are really difficult or for which you do not know the vocabulary. It is better to be simple and clear than complex and unclear.

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. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well, with the vast majority of students able to score some marks. It was really encouraging to see some excellent translations which were error-free, although there were not so many as in 2019.

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

Conveying key messages

My sister got married	Students found it difficult to form the third person preterite of a reflexive verb.
in January last year.	<i>Enero</i> was often not known.
Her husband is Spanish, but	The main issue here was the possessive pronoun <i>su</i> .

he speaks English very well.	This was done well.
They have bought a house	<i>Compraron</i> was accepted, as well as <i>han comprado</i> , and so this was done quite well on the whole.
near the coast.	Very well done.
I would like to go there	<i>Me gustaría ir</i> was done very well, but many failed with this section because they omitted <i>allí</i> or <i>ahí</i> .
in the summer,	Very well done.
before returning to school.	This was targeted at the top grades and it was the least well done of all the key messages. The difficulty lay primarily with the use of the prepositions <i>de</i> and <i>a</i> .
They say that	<i>Dicen</i> was often not conjugated correctly. Some used <i>se dice que</i> , which was perfectly acceptable.
the weather is good	This was done well, although the use of the verb <i>hacer</i> was relatively uncommon.
and it will be	Well done on the whole, although a good number incorrectly used <i>sería</i> .
a fantastic week.	Very well done.

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, *el año pasado*; *cerca la costa*. 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.

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.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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