



GCSE

SPANISH

8698/WF Paper 4 Writing Foundation Tier
Report on the Examination

8698/WF
June 2023

Version: 1.0

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General comments

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

The examination discriminated well and there was a full range of marks within individual questions. The mean mark was similar to that for 2022. The majority of students were able to score well in question 1 and they have been guided well by teachers with regard to what is needed for full marks. Question 2 was also done very well overall. Many students find translation from English into Spanish very difficult and this was reflected in the responses to question 3. Questions 4.1 and 4.2 were the questions that discriminated most effectively, with a wide variety of performance.

As with last year, the handwriting of many students was difficult to read and from time to time it was impossible to read key elements of a response, for example with verb endings, which are so crucial when it comes to clear communication.

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, casa, cumpleaños, pastel*. There were some errors that appeared quite frequently, such as: *Es la chica's cumpleaños*; the use of *bebo* or *bebe* for *bebida* and *como* or *come* for *comida*.

Students were given credit if they imagined that they were in the photo and used the first person of the verb, for example: *Es el cumpleaños de mi hermana*. 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. The bullet points were: *estudios; instalaciones; exámenes; comida en el colegio*.

A good number of students did not write anything about the facilities in the school and so must not have known the meaning of *instalaciones*. However, the majority of students were able to write something about all four bullet points. 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. The second strand in the Quality of language criteria concerns accuracy and some students who far exceeded the recommended 40 words for this question made more errors and so received a lower mark than they might otherwise have done.

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 something about all 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. However, there were a good number of students who found this question very challenging.

Conveying key messages

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

I live in the countryside.	This was done well. <i>Campo</i> was not known as well as expected. Many students used <i>costa</i> .
I want a good job.	Spellings of <i>quiero</i> were not always accurate, but sometimes still communicated the message. <i>Me gustaría</i> was an acceptable alternative and used quite frequently. It was quite rare for students to use <i>un buen trabajo</i> or <i>un trabajo bueno</i> accurately. However, <i>bien</i> was accepted for <i>buen/bueno</i> and this enabled more students to be rewarded.
I get on well	Many omitted the reflexive pronoun, but <i>Llevo bien</i> was accepted.

	The verb ending was often incorrect and that was not accepted.
with my parents.	This was done very well.
I have to	Most students knew <i>Tengo</i> . However, most omitted <i>que</i> and therefore did not convey the message. Other acceptable alternatives were <i>Debo</i> and <i>Necesito</i> .
buy	Most students knew the verb <i>comprar</i> and used the infinitive successfully. If <i>compro</i> was used instead, it was accepted, but this was something that could contribute towards a lower grammar mark.
a new computer.	This was done well on the whole, with several options for 'computer' being accepted. However, many failed to convey the message because they wrote <i>nueve</i> instead of <i>nuevo/nueva</i> .
We went to a shop	Although students tend to be confident in using the first person singular preterite of the verb <i>ir</i> , <i>fuimos</i> caused difficulty. In addition, <i>tienda</i> was often not known and so this message was frequently not conveyed.
where the ice creams	<i>Helados</i> was generally not known.
are great.	The main problem here was that students could not come up with an appropriate adjective meaning 'great', even though there were various options, such as <i>geniales</i> , <i>fantásticos</i> , <i>fenomenales</i> , <i>estupendos</i> . The correct adjectival agreement was not required for the message to be conveyed.

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 approximately 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.

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 difficulty 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

Of the two optional questions, this one was by far the more popular choice. The first bullet point was done well, provided students could provide a successful first person past tense verb. Many began their response with *La última vez que fuiste al centro de la ciudad ...* This did not prevent the bullet point being accomplished, provided the student could subsequently produce a first person past tense. The second bullet was done very well and students were able to give their opinions on pop music, often with a lot of detail and exemplification. In the third bullet, there were lots of opinions and justifications for preferring to watch films online or in the cinema and this was done well. For the fourth bullet, sometimes students did not realise that they had to write about sport that they were going to do, rather than what they usually do, and this meant that the task was not fulfilled.

Question 4.

Although this question was not as popular as 4.1, the mean mark of the two questions was very similar. The first bullet was done well if past tense usage was good. Where students began the reply with *Para mantenerte en forma*, the task was conveyed provided a successful first person past tense was used subsequently. In the second bullet point, most students were able to express a preference as to whether they prefer to spend time with a lot of friends or with a special friend and they were able to follow this up with appropriate reasons. The third bullet point caused few problems and students were able to give their views about the internet. Provided there was a clear reference to the future, through a time marker and/or a verb clearly referring to the future, the last bullet point was done well. However, this was not the case for many.

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 the two questions required the student to refer to a past event and another one to a future event. The response to the past event task varied, according to how well the student could communicate using a past tense or tenses. Usually this was done successfully through use of the preterite tense. As far as the future events were concerned, each one asked what the student was going to do and included *¿qué vas a hacer?* with a time marker (*este fin de semana* and *en el futuro*). The majority of students were able to change the person of the verb and begin their response to this task by saying: *Este fin de semana/En el futuro, voy a* plus an infinitive.

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* which was given by some of the better students.

As far as variety of language was concerned, 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. A common error arose when students used *tener divertido* to mean ‘to have fun’.

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 present being used instead of the preterite tense in the first bullet point of both questions. 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. 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.
- 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.