



GCSE

SPANISH

8698/WH Paper 4 Writing Higher Tier
Report on the Examination

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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 wide range of performance within questions and over the paper as a whole. As always with this paper, it was question 2 that discriminated best because of the more challenging criteria, especially for the language marks. From the responses, it appeared that the vast majority of students were entered at the correct tier.

A lot of handwriting was again very poor. 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. Many did this, but a small number 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.

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 1.1

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. At Higher tier, this was usually the case. Some 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 1.2

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 and this was generally the case at this tier. 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 some students.

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 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*.

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 an issue for some students, in particular with the present being used instead of the preterite tense in the first bullet point of both questions. At Higher tier there were fewer minor errors than at Foundation tier, but cumulatively they sometimes 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.

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. Students wrote a good amount for whichever of the optional questions they chose.

There was a wide variation in the quality of work in the two questions. The mean mark for Question 2.2 was higher than the mean for Question 2.1, but a similar number of students chose each question.

Content

Many students exceeded the recommended 150 words and some wrote more than double that amount. This usually resulted in more errors being made which often had a negative 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

The first bullet point was addressed well by most students and they were able to give good and bad points in relation to spending holidays in England. If information in relation to either the negative or the positive aspects was omitted, the bullet point was not fulfilled. The second bullet point caused considerable difficulty and was the reason why the mean mark for this question was lower than that for Question 2.2. The problem was that tense usage when writing about problems with technology in the past was sometimes so inaccurate that not only was the bullet point not conveyed, but also there was a detrimental effect on the language marks.

Question 2.2

Both bullet points were addressed successfully by most students. Occasionally in the first bullet point, students wrote about their own school experiences but were unsuccessful in making this a recommendation for being happy. However, the task was accomplished if the student was able to say things they enjoy doing at school and to give reasons why. The second task was done very well and students were able to write clearly about their ambitions for the future.

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 were considered as attempts at complexity. In terms of variety of language, most 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 difficult 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 the two bullet points of each question, many students used a wide range of tenses as they developed their response. There were also examples of good use of the subjunctive. This was seen most often in the second bullet point of question 2.2, through phrases such as *Si ganara mucho dinero ...* This was beyond what was

required for full marks, but it was not uncommon. 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 2.1. Where students' use of verbs was poor, there was a detrimental effect on 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. There were some excellent translations which were error-free, although there was usually at least one key message that was not conveyed because of a major error.

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

Conveying key messages

There are two (-) students	This message was targeting the lower grades at this tier and it was done very well. <i>Estudiantes/alumnos</i> was sometimes spelt incorrectly, but it was often still close enough to be accepted.
(new) in my class	The main reason why this message was not communicated was when <i>nuevos/nuevas</i> was rendered as <i>nueve</i> .
and I get on best	The main issue here was when 'best' was translated as <i>bien</i> . This was not accepted.
with a boy who	This was done well.
is called Lucas.	The main problem was when the verb ending was incorrect, the most common error being <i>llamo</i> for <i>llama</i> .
He is going to live in the	<i>Campo</i> was not known more often than expected.

countryside	
where they do a lot	The main problems here were with the use of <i>hace</i> instead of <i>hacen</i> and with <i>muchos/muchas</i> for <i>mucho</i> , neither of which was accepted.
to protect	The omission of <i>para</i> was the most common error. Another one was <i>proctectar</i> for <i>proteger</i> .
the environment. Yesterday,	This was done well, although some translated 'environment' as <i>ambiente</i> .
we went to pick up	<i>Coger/recoger</i> were not well known.
rubbish in the park.	This was done well.
We were lucky	Only the very best students conveyed this message.
because it did not rain.	Only the very best students conveyed this message. This was to be expected because this message and the previous one were targeting the top grades.

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, *bassura en el parque*. 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.