



GCSE **Spanish**

8698/WH Paper 1 Writing Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

8698
June 2024

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 mean mark was slightly higher than that for 2023. 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. Question 3, the translation, was usually the one that students found most difficult.

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 or lower 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 the one that caused most difficulty for students when they could not produce a first person preterite verb. However, at this tier, that was not too common. Some began their response with *Un día interesante que*

pasaste con amigos recientemente ... 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 the house or flat where they live, often with a lot of detail. In the third bullet, students were generally able to say what they do not like about their region and to develop their opinions. The fourth bullet point was done very well and students were usually confident in producing the immediate future tense. However, some did not convey the bullet point because they used *ir a* or *visitar* instead of *vivir*.

Question 1.2

This was the less popular choice of the two optional questions, but the mean mark of the two questions was similar. The first bullet was done well if past tense usage was good and it usually was. Where students began the reply with *Un día interesante que pasaste en el colegio recientemente*, the task was conveyed provided a successful first person past tense was used subsequently. The second bullet point was done well. However, some students thought that this bullet point was asking about lessons and made no mention of their classmates. The third bullet point was done well. Many students fulfilled it successfully by saying the subjects they do not like. 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. Any activities were accepted, whether they related to education or not. This task was done very well.

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 a phrase in the immediate future with a time marker (*en el futuro* and *el septiembre próximo*). The majority of students were able to change the person of the verb and begin their response to this task by saying: *En el futuro/El septiembre próximo 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; es la leche*. 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.

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.

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 both questions was similar, and more students chose 2.1 than 2.2.

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 opinions about technology. Most gave a balanced response, picking out both pros and cons, but there was no requirement to do this. The second bullet point tended to be done very well, although it was clear that some students had not picked up on the mention of *vida sana* and they failed to convey the bullet point because they wrote about future plans more generally.

Question 2.2

Both bullet points were addressed successfully by most students. Where there was a notable difference between the quality of the response to the two bullet points, it was generally the second one that was done better. Students generally seemed well prepared to write about a day during a past holiday or a day in their town during the school holidays.

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. 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. 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

My mother celebrated	The main problem here was that many students missed off the accent on <i>celebró</i> and so gave a first-person present tense, rather than a third person preterite.
an important birthday this year.	This was done well, but the most common reason for the message not being conveyed was a failure to translate ‘this’.
We all went	<i>Fuimos</i> was well known, <i>todos</i> less so.
to her favourite restaurant and	This was done well, with the only real point of difficulty being the possessive pronoun <i>su</i> . Some students got around this by translating it as <i>al restaurante favorito de mi madre</i> .
we had a good time.	<i>Lo pasamos bien/bomba</i> were the most common ways to translate this successfully.
She writes in a digital magazine	This was done well, provided the verb was rendered correctly.
that is full of	This proved challenging, with a relatively small proportion of students knowing the adjective <i>lleno</i> .
news about the environment.	<i>Noticias</i> was often rendered as <i>información</i> , which was accepted, and this was done quite well. The most common error was to translate ‘news’ as <i>nuevos</i> .
She loves the job.	The problem here was with the omission of the pronoun <i>le</i> , which was required for the message to be communicated.
She thinks that	This was done well.
global warming	This item of vocabulary was not known by many.
is the biggest problem	This was done well. The main problem was when students wanted to use <i>mayor</i> , but wrote <i>mejor</i> instead.
in the world today.	This was done well on the whole, but sometimes either <i>mundo</i> or <i>hoy</i> was not known.

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, *en la mundo hoy*. 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.