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GCSE

**SPANISH**

8698/WF Writing Foundation tier  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

There was a wide difference in the quality of work and the paper discriminated well. Most students were able to gain marks in all questions and it seemed that the vast majority had been entered at the appropriate tier. Most students showed a good knowledge of the vocabulary required for the tasks and many had the grammatical knowhow to deal with the different tasks. Time frames were tested in questions 3 and 4 and, again, there was evidence that a good number of students were confident in this area. Where a student's grammatical knowledge was lacking, this would invariably lead to some loss of clarity which had a negative impact on communication and quality of language. In questions 2 and 4, many students far exceeded the recommended word count and very often, in so doing, made more errors which meant they got a lower mark for quality of language than they may otherwise have done.

## Question 1

Marks in this question are for communication only and each of the four sentences written by the student was worth a maximum of two marks. Because clarity of the message is the key element, the students who were most successful in this question were those who used simple language, usually with a verb like *hay* or *veo*, followed by something they could see in the photo. The sentences had to relate to something that was in the photo and so a general opinion such as *Me gusta la foto* or a description such as *La foto es en blanco y negro* did not score a mark. However, *Me gusta el árbol*, for example, was creditworthy. If there was ambiguity or a delay in communication in what the student wrote, then a mark of one was given. This included instances where the verb was omitted.

Sometimes students wrote too much and lost marks as a result. For example, *Hay una familia y comen chica* scored one mark because of the delay in communication, whereas *Hay una familia* would score two marks.

Some students also stated what was *not* in the photo and this scored zero marks, for example *No veo un perro*.

## Advice to students

- Include a verb, but keep the sentences short and simple to make sure you communicate a clear message.

## Question 2

In this question there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points are compulsory and must be covered, but there is 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 bullets relating to *deportes* and *televisión* were done very well, but a number of students omitted any reference to *redes sociales*, suggesting that they probably did not understand what it meant. Sometimes *centro comercial* was understood to mean the town centre.

Students could write anything at all in relation to each bullet point, although the majority tended to give their opinion on each aspect.

Clarity of communication was important and there were often lapses in clarity when students tried to use tenses other than the present. There is no requirement to do that in this question.

### 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. So, where students gave opinions for each aspect, they could vary their language, for example by using verbs such as *(no) me gusta*, *me encanta* and *odio* and adjectives such as *divertido*, *emocionante* and *aburrido*. Those students who kept to simple language like this also tended to produce accurate language, which is the other strand in Quality of language.

Many students wrote considerably more than the recommended 40 words. Very often this meant that more errors were made and the mark was lower as a result.

### 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 omitting them. If you miss out a bullet point entirely, you automatically lose two marks for Content.
- Tick off each bullet point on the 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.

### Conveying key messages

I eat	<i>Como</i> was well known, although students sometimes used the infinitive
lots of fruit	<i>Muy</i> was often used for <i>mucha</i> ; the spelling of <i>fruta</i> varied enormously
I prefer	Minor misspellings of <i>prefiero</i> were allowed and there were many of them
to download music	<i>Descargar</i> or <i>bajar</i> proved difficult for most students
The poor man	<i>Hombre</i> was known by most, but <i>pobre</i> was less well known
lives on the street	Students sometimes found it hard to conjugate the third person of <i>vivir</i> . <i>Calle</i> was also not known by many
I bought	The accent was needed on <i>compré</i> , as the meaning was changed

	without it
a new laptop	Some students used <i>nueve</i> instead of <i>nuevo</i> . <i>Ordenador</i> and <i>tableta</i> were acceptable variations of <i>portátil</i>
on Saturday	This was done well, although <i>domingo</i> was not uncommon
I think that	Students tended to know <i>creo que</i> or <i>pienso que</i> . Some also used <i>me parece que</i>
I am going to study Spanish	This was done very well, even by students who struggled with some of the other more straightforward messages
next year	<i>El año próximo/próximo año</i> or <i>el año que viene</i> were within the reach of most

### 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, *mucho fruta*; *me prefiero*; *el ano que viene*. 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.

### Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is 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 or because they wrote too much and made more errors in so doing. This affected the mark for Quality of language.

At this tier, it was 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, development of ideas, 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 8 or 9 if there were lapses in clarity.

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**Question 4.1**

More students answered this question than did Question 4.2. The first bullet point about the student's home town was answered well and often more was written in relation to this point than the others. There was only a requirement to write about what was liked or disliked, but many wrote about both. The second bullet point, about a recent excursion, was not done so well at this tier, mainly because of the need to refer to a past event. If the present tense was used, this clearly led to a lack of clarity in the intended message. The third bullet, about what the student does to protect the environment, required quite specific vocabulary, which some lacked. However, there were some good examples of appropriate activities: *Voy al colegio a pie en vez de en coche; recicló plástico; ahorro agua*. The last bullet about where the student wants to live in the future was done well overall and there were plenty of good reasons given for wanting to live there.

**Question 4.2**

In the first bullet point, some students ignored what was said in the introductory rubric about a St Valentine's party and instead wrote about a festival, usually the *Tomatina* or *Día de los Muertos*. The other problem was with tense usage, with many students writing in the present tense. Students seemed to enjoy writing about their ideal boyfriend or girlfriend and they did it well. There were lots of positive and negative opinions given about marriage and, again, this bullet point was answered well. Some of the ambitions for the future were in the near future, but credit was given for any activity that the student wanted to do. This bullet point elicited reference to a future event and was tackled better than the one relating to 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.

Students were able to show a variety of vocabulary in relation to the four bullet points of their chosen question. This came automatically as they were asked to write about diverse topics.

Both questions elicited language which referred to past, present and future events and students had the possibility here to show a knowledge of different tenses. This was not always done successfully, in particular with the bullet points requiring reference to the past.

When giving opinions, many students were able to use different verbs and adjectives which lent greater variety to their writing. Two bullet points per question directly elicited opinions.

Complexity at this tier was achieved in various ways: infinitive constructions; subordinate clauses; the use of longer sentences formed using connectives; comparatives; negatives; the use of *lo* with an adjective; the present subjunctive in phrases such as *cuando sea mayor*. At this level, the subjunctive is probably being used in the form of a set phrase, but it still adds complexity to the writing.

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. Another major error, which prevented a bullet point being accomplished, was when the student repeated *tu* from the prompt (*tu pueblo es increíble; tu novia ideal es inteligente*). A good number of minor errors, for example of gender or adjectival agreement, at times led to a lower mark.

**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 4.1, the third bullet point is: *qué haces para proteger el medio ambiente*. You are given an ideal start to a sentence: *Para proteger el medio ambiente,...* If you do this, make sure the spelling is accurate.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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