

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Spanish(6SP03)  
Unit 3 Understanding and Spoken  
Response

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## **Format of the test**

The assessment for Unit 3 has two distinct parts involving a debate and a general discussion on a chosen issue by the candidate. The whole assessment lasts between 11 and 13 minutes.

The debate requires candidates to present and to take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. The teacher/examiner takes the role of 'devil's advocate' by adopting the opposite view to the candidate and providing strong and meaningful challenges to allow candidates to defend their views, and to use the language of debate and argument.

At the end of this section, the teacher/examiner indicates that the examination is moving to the second part of the test and moves away smoothly from the debate in part one, to the discussion in part two, by asking a link question that leads from the initial issue into an area associated with the initial issue.

In some cases, it is acceptable to move to the second part of the test by moving to a completely different topic and making an appropriate remark to that effect, *"ahora vamos a hablar de algo completamente diferente. ....?"*

In the second part of the examination candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to engage in a natural, unpredictable (but not unfamiliar) and meaningful discussion of two or three follow up issues. During this section the examiner should encourage the candidate to express their views on the issues raised.

The aim of this unit is set out in Section A (pg 6) of the Edexcel GCE MFL Spanish Specifications. Candidates are expected to interact effectively with the teacher/examiner, defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher/examiner moves the conversation away from the chosen issue. Centres are reminded that the test is an examination of the candidate's ability to use language spontaneously in largely unpredictable circumstances.

## **Assessment Principles**

The test is assessed positively out of 50.

## **Response (20 marks)**

There are three descriptors in this box:

- Spontaneity - Is the discourse spontaneous or pre-learned? To what extent?
- Abstract concepts - Can the candidate handle abstract concepts not purely concrete exchanges? Is the discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive?
- Range of lexis and structures - Does the candidate have a good range of lexis and sentence structures appropriate to the issues discussed?

Candidates will score well here if the test is a genuine discussion and not a sequence of pre-arranged questions and answers.

## **Quality of Language (7 marks)**

This box assesses accuracy of language, pronunciation and intonation.

### **Reading and research (7 marks)**

This box assesses candidates' level of awareness and understanding of both general issues and the chosen issue for debate

Candidates need to undertake research into their chosen issue and read widely around other topics in order to be able to demonstrate awareness and to be able to formulate their opinion and justify their arguments.

### **Comprehension and development (16 marks)**

There are two descriptors in this box:

- The ability to understand the spoken language - Can candidates understand all the implications of the questions put to them?
- The ability to develop the responses - Can candidates respond demonstrating understanding, take the initiative and move the discussion forward?

Candidates will score well here if they have no problems with the understanding of, and implications of, the areas under discussion, not merely understanding the language. Candidates will also need to develop the discussion by offering a longer, (sometimes personal) contribution that leads to further paths for development.

### **Candidate performance**

Most centres had a good understanding of what was required of this unit and their candidates were well prepared. There was a wide range in quality in the performances heard. However there were many fine and very competent performances noted.

It is very important for Centres to remember that successful outcome for candidates in this test is closely related to and often dependent upon the way the teacher examiner conducts the examination. The following observations from tests submitted this summer illustrates this point.

Some teachers did not observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination adversely affecting the candidates' marks. Some presentations were too long, (up to 3 minutes). Some debates were short, (under 4 minutes) and some were long and went on for 7 minutes.

Some teacher/examiners spent too long on the initial issue and the first topic that they had little time to develop a second one.

In some cases the initial issue was conducted as a knowledge test rather than a debate. If the teacher/examiner did not challenge the candidates' stance the appropriate penalty cap was applied, as per the marking guidance information.

Some examiners allowed their candidates to recite long monologues learnt by heart without interruption and, at times it appeared that they had colluded with candidates. Such practice merely indicates a lack of spontaneity and an over reliance on pre-learning. In such instances, candidates' marks will have been affected.

Candidates should be told that they will be expected to discuss any of the issues they have worked on in class, at home or currently in the news. The precise issues to be discussed in

their exam and how they are going to be treated constitutes the unpredictable nature of the test and thereby ensures that candidates' responses are spontaneous.

Candidates will not score highly if teacher/examiners use the same set of topics and questions for all candidates.

The majority of candidates did answer the question asked but there were still some who decided to reinterpret the question into one that they would have liked to be put to them and followed their own agenda.

In spite of the above it was very pleasing to note that most candidates approached the test with confidence and responded readily and fluently to all questions asked and they were able to develop their replies without too much reliance on or prompting from the examiner.

### **The debate**

The best candidates had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support their arguments. They also had good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. Weaker performing candidates simply relied on assertion, generalisations or personal conviction to pull through and consequently all too often ran out of ideas and tended to repeat their arguments.

### **The discussion**

In this part of the examination the better performing candidates were well informed and aware of current issues, could express their opinions clearly, analyse and justify their points of view with examples or evidence and develop their responses.

Some excellent examining was heard from many Centres where teacher/examiners asked probing questions in no more than two or three follow up areas which allowed their candidates to produce the necessary detail and depth in their responses. All areas introduced for development were well linked and followed a natural course in ensuing discussion.

The following are two good examples for the oral tests noted by our examiners:

**1. Chosen Issue:** *"A favor de los derechos del feto"*

**Follow up areas:** Animal rights  
Deforestation  
The effects of climate change

**2. Chosen Issue:** *"A favor del uso del velo y el burka"*

**Follow up areas:** *The importance of religion*  
*Violence motivated by religious intolerance (the Woolwich attack)*  
*Death penalty.*

Occasionally some teacher/examiners neglected to follow the principles of a discussion as an interaction between two people. Instead they simply went through the motions of mentioning a topic followed by, *¿qué opinas?* Then, moving on to a new topic after the candidate had replied, without any follow-up questions or further probing on the issue. At times there were as many as 10 unconnected topics covered. These examinations were

more interviews than discussions and resulted in a series of long monologues. This is not what is expected or required.

Very occasionally the teacher/examiner spoke as much as the candidate. At times there were as many as 13 interventions from the teacher/examiner within the 6 minutes for the discussion part of the exam. This did not leave the candidate much time to say anything meaningful and, as a consequence, disadvantaged the candidate from accessing the full range of the marking criteria.

Some teacher/examiners adopted a clear debating attitude in the second part of the exam, instead of just conducting a discussion.

Teacher/examiners must also be aware that questions concerning the candidates' future plans can only be relevant if they lead on to a more in-depth examination of topics, such as unemployment fears or the value of tourism/effect of tourism on the environment.

The follow up areas for this part of the examination can be chosen from the additional General Topic Areas for A2 as well as from the General Topic Area for AS. However for a candidate aiming to access the higher mark bands, AS topics visited at A2 should be considered in greater depth, and answers given to questions should clearly indicate progression from AS to A2.

Occasionally teacher/examiners conducted the first part of the exam (the debate) correctly but for the second part (the discussion) they asked AS type questions, carrying out a re-run of the Unit 1 speaking test and, thereby, not giving the candidates any chance to develop their response appropriately.

Illustrated below and noted by our examiners are:

**1. An example of an exam that had a suitable follow up topic to discuss but where many of the questions were unsuitable.**

*¿Estás de acuerdo con el precio de las tasas universitarias?*

**Follow-up questions:**

- *¿Tú quieres ir a la universidad?*
- *¿Qué quieres estudiar?*
- *¿Cuáles son las carreras más populares?*
- *¿Tú trabajas?*
- *¿Crees que es bueno trabajar y estudiar al mismo tiempo?*
- *¿Cuáles crees que son los trabajos mejor pagados?*
- *¿Es importante el conocimiento del manejo de ordenadores para conseguir un buen trabajo?*

**2. An example of an exam that had suitable A2 level questions relating to fashion, a common AS topic.**

- *¿Por qué es importante la moda?*
- *¿Crees que la moda es arte?*
- *¿Se debería pagar tanto por un vestido como por un cuadro?*
- *¿Qué opinas de la ropa barata que podemos comprar hoy?*
- *¿Crees que la gente piensa en cómo se produce y de donde viene esta ropa?*

- *¿Qué ventajas y desventajas tiene la globalización?*

**3. An example of a discussion that illustrates the progression needed from AS to A2. This discussion relates to technology, a common AS topic.**

*T/E ¿Crees que se debería censurar el contenido de Internet?*

*C Hoy en día Internet es un símbolo de la democracia sin embargo yo creo que la protección del ciudadano es muy importante y por lo tanto el gobierno debería censurar su contenido.*

*T/E Pero eso traería problemas, como la censura ideológica, no?*

*C Entiendo tu preocupación porque hay países como China que utilizan la censura para evitar la influencia extranjera. No estoy a favor de este tipo de censura, yo estoy convencido de que los gobiernos democráticos no usen la censura para manipular a la gente solamente se usarán para proteger a la sociedad de peligros. Lo que es en contra de la democracia son las páginas web con imágenes de terrorismo y de videos de niños abusados que están colgados en Internet.*

*T/E Y no sería mejor que los padres controlen el uso de Internet?*

*C Desafortunadamente hay padres que no cumplen sus responsabilidades y no controlan a sus hijos. En mi opinión lo mismo que hay leyes para controlar el uso de alcohol y drogas en menores también debería haber leyes para controlar estas influencias negativas*

*T/E Pero tú crees que la sociedad está tan influenciada por Internet?*

*C Creo que sí, ha contribuido al aumento de grupos de terrorismo y racismo que usan el Internet para buscar apoyo y propagar sus ideas, ha enseñado a estos grupos como fabricar bombas y armas. Mucha gente coge estas ideas de foros en la red.*

**Suitability of Topics/ Issues**

The range of issues chosen for the debate was fairly wide. The most successful ones tended to be those that had a moral and/or ethical dimension and which had several possibilities for development. Some issues chosen for the debate were opinions rather than debatable points and, as such, could not create a meaningful argument.

As last year the most popular issues were abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration, homosexual marriages and the legalisation of drugs.

Some other interesting issues presented this year were:

- *A favor de los cigarrillos electrónicos*
- *Contra la fracturación hidráulica*
- *Contra el derecho al voto de los inmigrantes*
- *En contra del derecho de poseer armas (Estados Unidos/Pistorius en Sud África)*
- *A favor de la pena de muerte para los terroristas de Boston*
- *A favor de la comida transgénica*
- *A favor de la independencia de Cataluña*
- *A favor de que la cirugía plástica sea pagada por el individuo*
- *Contra la criminalización de la prostitución*
- *A favor de una nueva pista en Heathrow*
- *El grafiti es arte no vandalismo*
- *En contra del envío de armas a Siria*
- *A favor del lado israelí en el conflicto de las naciones árabes e Israel*
- *A favor de la discriminación positiva*
- *A favor de la política de un niño por pareja en China*

Unsuitable issues were those that were not arguable from both sides, or ones where the candidate was simply expressing personal opinion, such as:

- *A favor de que los programas realidad son malos para los jóvenes.*
- *En contra de los embarazos en la adolescencia.*

Unsuitable issues where much time was spent enquiring rather than debating:

- *A favor de Internet*
- *Contra el uso de la cárcel*
- *Todos deberíamos hablar un solo idioma*
- *En contra del mundo virtual*

## The discussion

Popular current follow-up topics were:

- Syria
- the role of the monarchy
- terrorism
- the economic crisis
- unemployment in the Euro zone
- government cuts to social services/education
- nuclear/renewable energy
- animals used for experimentation
- bull fighting
- the importance of religion nowadays

## Quality of language

### Common errors:

- Confusion of *ser*, *estar* and *haber*; *saber/conocer*; *por/para*
- Wrong verb endings, infinitives and gerunds
- No use of verb, eg; *'no necesario'* *'no posible'*
- Gender of nouns, agreement of adjectives
- Erratic subject/verb agreement
- Confusion between nouns and adjectives

Good candidates stood out with:

- Complex sentences with relative pronouns
- Use of phrases, such as *'ya que'*, *'entonces'*, *por eso'*, *'por consecuencia'*, *'no solo eso sino también'*, *'sobre todo'*, *'lo que quiero decir es que'* *'y además'*
- Correct comparatives
- Correct use of pronouns
- Correct and appropriate use of the subjunctive
- Correct verb endings, varied tenses
- Correct use of the reflexive
- Correct prepositions following verbs.
- Natural use of conversational joiners, such as, *"lo que pasa es que....."* *"comprendo lo que dice pero...."*, *"bueno en algunos casos pero en otros es...."*
- Idiomatic expressions, such as, *'me saca de quicio'*, *'me da rabia'*
- Lexis such as, *la fracturación hidráulica/ propagar / colgar páginas web en Internet / la resonancia magnética / suscitar polémica / descartar / restringir / postrado en la cama / las dos caras de la moneda / la fuga de cerebros / el poder adquisitivo / ser*

*propenso a sufrir depresión / las directrices legales / adiestrados / un tema de gran envergadura / precios desorbitados / idolatrar, and others.*

In some cases the pronunciation of some words, especially those close to the English gave rise to some difficulty, for example:

- *difícil*
- *fácil*
- *idea*
- *usan*
- *policía*
- *problema*
- *variedad*
- *sociedad*
- *Europa*
- *eutanasia*

Also the incorrect pronunciation of the silent 'h', for example:

- *alcohol* = "*alcojol*"
- *ahorrar* = "*ajorrar*"

Some confusion with:

- *muy/mucho; mayor/mejor and menor*
- words such as, *igualdad, mayoría, controversial, suportivo, serio, las medias, los resultados, los afectos, el mundo tercero, la destinación, las Olímpicas*
- expressions such as, *es depende, es vale, es necesita, es importancia, es ridículo, es puede, no es importancia, es debe que*
- English verbs given a Spanish ending, for example, *restringir, afrontar, acceder, permitir, suportar, promover, resolver.*

Candidates should be encouraged to use the language of debate and teachers might like to introduce idioms that aid this kind of dialogue such as:

- *a mi parecer*
- *a mi modo de ver*
- *estoy convencida que*
- *admito que*
- *yo también lo veo así*
- *además*
- *no solo eso sino también*
- *no se puede negar que*
- *lo que quiero decir es que*
- *hay excepciones*
- *de acuerdo a*
- *según*
- *no comparto este punto de vista*
- *no estoy de acuerdo con lo que dices porque,*
- *entiendo lo que dice pero,*
- *hay que tener en cuenta que*

etc

## Teacher/Examiner performance

### Conduct of the examination

Most teacher/examiners conducted excellent tests. They had carefully read the oral training guide, the Examiner's report as well as the Teacher/Examiner Handbook and followed all the guidelines. To reward the candidates' ability to understand spoken Spanish these examiners asked clear, uncluttered and yet challenging questions using a variety of structures and lexis. They listened to the detail of what their candidates said and followed their lead.

However in a few cases teacher/examiners spoke too much during the test and asked long and some quite convoluted questions, interrupted/ corrected the candidate or, dominated the exchange. This was to the disadvantage of their candidates.

### Timing

The specification is clear about the timing required for the Unit 3 exam.

In Part 1, (the debate) candidates should introduce the stance for their debate for up to 1 minute, (it is not essential for candidate to use the whole minute) after which the teacher/examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the examiner moves on to the discussion section (Part 2).

Centres are reminded that it would be unnatural for any discussion to adhere precisely to the quoted timings as there needs to be a smooth transition from one topic to another. Nevertheless the timings of the examination should remain as close as possible to those indicated in the specification.

In the cases where the tests were short the agreed penalty was applied to the test and resulted in a loss of marks. Where tests were too long examiner stopped listening at the end of the next sentence once 13 minutes had passed.

### Centre Administration

#### Recording

The tests received from Centres were recorded appropriately on either cassettes, CDs or USBs. All forms were acceptable this year however cassettes will not be acceptable from September 2014 onwards.

***Centres are reminded of the Edexcel Notice to Centres on the website to inform them that audio cassettes will no longer be accepted for assessment after September 2014.***

On the whole, the recordings were correctly labeled, well packaged and arrived undamaged, accompanied by the attendance register and the OR3 oral form correctly completed.

The quality of the recording was, for most candidates, very clear although occasionally the teacher/examiners placed the microphone closer to the themselves rather than to the candidate and, as a consequence, recordings were difficult to hear.

Before sending the digital recordings to the Edexcel examiner on CD, it is important that the Centre double checks that all recordings have been "finalised" on the computer so that recordings are downloaded on the CD.

### **Documentation**

A few centres failed to send the attendance registers with the recordings. Occasionally the OR3 oral forms included the stance on the issue written in English rather than in Spanish, as required.

### **Teacher/Examiners - Advice and Guidance**

- Examiners need to observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination.
- Candidates must choose a controversial issue that easily lends itself to debate, and they must make sure it is phrased correctly, '*estoy a favor de..*' '*estoy en contra de..*'.
- Candidates need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments.
- Examiners should challenge the candidates' views so that they are given suitable opportunities to demonstrate their ability to argue their case and justify their opinion. If there is no debate the penalty cap will be applied, as per the marking guidance information.
- Candidates should not be given advance knowledge of the issues to be raised during the examination, or learn their answers by heart as this lack of spontaneity will be reflected in the application of the mark scheme.
- Examiners need to ask sufficiently complex and challenging questions to allow their candidates to access the full range of marks available for Comprehension and Development. Please note questions can be linguistically challenging or conceptually challenging. Complexity can be achieved through the response individual questions require.
- Examiners must make sure that the second part of the exam is not a re-run of the Unit 1 (AS) oral test. For candidates to access the higher marks they must show progression from AS to A2
- Examiners must remember that the second part of the exam is a discussion not a debate.
- Examiners should not introduce too many follow up issues to allow candidates to produce depth of discussion and development of opinions.
- Centres should not rotate the same two or three issues for all their candidates but rather personalise each examination for each individual candidate.
- Examiners should not correct, clarify or finish candidates' responses.

### **Conclusion**

The outcome of the examination of this unit this summer was pleasing. The majority of Centres had prepared their candidates thoroughly, so they had a good understanding of the requirements of this unit. This allowed candidates to respond well to its demands.

## Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

### Marking guidance for oral examiners

#### Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

The timing of the test begins the moment the candidate starts the presentation.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 5–8   | Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.                      |
| 9–12  | Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts. |
| 13–16 | Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.                                     |

If a candidate would have scored 12, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. This adjustment should not be applied to 'Quality of language' or 'Reading and research'.

#### Tests that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

#### Tests that do not have a debatable or defensible issue

*e.g. where the candidate does not present or defend a definite stance, or the teacher-examiner fails to give the candidate an opportunity to justify their opinions.*

- Candidates will be limited to scoring a maximum of 4 for 'Reading and Research'.
- This may affect the marks given for 'Comprehension and Development'.

#### Tests that do not move away from initial issue/topic

*e.g. further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered and/or a monologue.*

- Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

| Response                                     |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed | No more than 12 marks |
| No unpredictable areas discussed             | No more than 8 marks  |

| <b>Reading and research</b>                  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed | No more than 4 marks |
| No unpredictable areas discussed             | No more than 3 marks |

| <b>Comprehension and development</b>         |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed | No more than 10 marks |
| No unpredictable areas discussed             | No more than 7 marks  |

### **Tests that are pre-learnt**

Pre-learnt is defined as a performance which is largely recited and may demonstrate very little spontaneity and impaired intonation. Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see 'Response' grid.

- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

Pre-learnt tests may also affect the mark given for 'Comprehension and Development' if it does not permit a natural and logical interaction.

**If a score of '0' is awarded for any of the assessment grids, the recording should be referred to your Team Leader.**

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:  
<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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