

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

GCE Spanish (8SP01/9SP01)

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## Spanish 6SP01 Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections - A and B and lasts between 8-10 minutes.

In section A candidates are required to respond to four Edexcel-set questions on a stimulus related to a student's chosen general topic area. The first two questions will relate directly to the content of the stimulus card and the second two questions will invite the candidate to give opinions or react to the topic of the stimulus.

In section B the teacher/examiner should engage the candidate in a discussion that, although relates to the same general topic area and its linked sub-topics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

### Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 50 using the grid printed in the specification (1.4, p. 24 and p. 25). Quality of language (Accuracy) 8 marks, Quality of language (Range) 8 marks, Response 20 marks, Understanding (stimulus specific) 4 marks, Understanding (General topic area) 10 marks. The application of marking is as follows:

#### Test that are too short

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

- 'Quality of Language - Accuracy'
- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis'
- 'Response'

e.g.

4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

If a candidate would have scored 7, they are given 5, if they would have scored 6, they are given 4. The penalty is not be applied to 'Understanding - Stimulus specific' or 'Understanding - General Topic Area'

#### Test that are too long

Once the 10 minute mark has passed, the examiner stopped listening at the end of the next sentence.

#### Tests that do not move away from initial input

Candidates were limited in the amount of marks they could score.

- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis' - cannot score more than 3
- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8
- 'Understanding - General topic area' - cannot score more than 0

The application of marking for Unit 1, is the same for all GCE 2008 languages.

## Candidates' Responses

There were some good examples of good teacher examining in spite of the fact that this was a new test and for many centres this was their first entry. The majority of candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of the unit and had clearly been well prepared by their centres for the examination. The majority of centres conducted the examinations professionally making the job of the examiners much easier. In most cases the accompanying OR1 oral forms were sent correctly completed. Centres should be reminded that the OR1 form is essential and can be downloaded from the Edexcel web site and the completed forms should be sent along with the recordings. Attendance registers were received from most centres and the tapes/CDs were, on the whole, well labelled, well packaged and arrived undamaged. The quality of recording was, for most candidates, very clear and it is obvious that centres are now using external microphones which help with this. It is worth investing in multi-directional external microphones for the purpose of recording oral examinations. Whilst it is difficult to avoid external noises and interruptions in the corridors which did come through on some of the tapes, the sound of mobile phones in the examination room is unnecessary and should be prohibited in all cases. All candidates had clearly prepared the stimulus well and demonstrated a clear understanding of the content of the oral stimulus in their answers to the first two questions in Section A. Most candidates had prepared some good ideas for questions 3 and 4 during their 15 minutes preparation time and answered all four Edexcel-set questions with a fair degree of detail.

Success in this section is dependent on the candidate's understanding of the stimulus and his/her ability to manipulate the language, rather than lift the words from the text, and express the ideas in his/her own words. Candidates had clearly been well prepared for this part of the test and had recognised that questions 1 and 2 related to the content of the text. In all cases the better candidates were able to manipulate the language of the texts and further develop their responses with detailed examples and explanations. The weaker candidates used partial or complete lifts and produced satisfactory responses to questions 1 and 2 (achieving a maximum of 2 marks overall for this criterion).

Here is an example of a candidate who demonstrates the ability to understand questions 1 and 2 in section A, extract the relevant information from the stimulus but communicate it in her own words:

YC S1 - TE: Q1- *"según el artículo, ¿Qué decisión ha tomado el gobierno y por qué? "el gobierno ha tomado la decisión de continuar la ilegalización del cannabis porque dice que es irresponsable permitir el uso del cannabis porque es peligroso para la salud de los ciudadanos y el gobierno dice que es su responsabilidad cuidarlos contra los peligros"*

TE: Q2 - *"Según el artículo ¿Qué opinan los médicos? "Los médicos están de acuerdo porque dicen que el cannabis es peligroso para el cuerpo, el sistema nervioso; los órganos son afectados por el uso. Hace que los jóvenes no asisten al colegio y saquen malas notas y básicamente pierdan el norte"*

Points are rewarded for the level of understanding and the detail given in answering the questions, therefore students should be encouraged to expand, develop and explain their points of view to obtain the top marks for Understanding (stimulus

specific). In a minority of cases the teacher/examiner stopped the candidate when he/she felt the student had answered sufficiently instead of allowing and encouraging the candidate to continue.

In this series the very best candidates were able to manipulate language from the stimulus and expand, explain and develop the content. However often even near native candidates were simply satisfied with partially lifting the content without expanding their answers sufficiently which resulted in a satisfactory response only and as a consequence a maximum outcome of only 2 out of the 4 marks available. The best candidates had prepared some good ideas for questions 3 and 4 during their 15 minutes preparation time and answered all four Edexcel-set questions with a fair degree of detail. Most candidates dealt well with the unpredictable elements of this test and the slightly more challenging language which were to be found mostly in question 4. On the whole most teacher/examiners read verbatim (as is required) the four Edexcel-set questions for section A and repeated them (which is allowed) at the request of the students. As in the January series, however, despite the instructions to centres on the conduct of the examination, in a minority of cases the teacher/examiner failed to keep to the four prescribed questions in Section A and either rephrased the question or added supplementary questions (when, for example, teachers felt a candidate had forgotten to respond to half a question e.g. *ventajas y desventajas*) which penalised their candidates' performances as their responses here had to be ignored by examiners.

In a minority of cases too much time was spent on section A which gave little opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate a good understanding of the GTA and gain the higher marks.

Success in Section B is partly the responsibility of the teacher/examiner and his/her choice of follow-up questions. Section B is a good opportunity for the teacher/examiner to allow the candidates to show that they have prepared for this unit and to demonstrate their research and how they can express themselves both in terms of vocabulary and ideas and opinions on a wider set of sub-topics. In Section B some excellent examining was heard from most centres. Teacher/examiners listened very carefully to the responses of the candidate, asking open rather than closed questions leading the conversation naturally through to other aspects of the GTA areas rather than rigidly using a set of pre-prepared questions, the same for each candidate. For example one candidate had mentioned that friends were the biggest influence in young people's lives today at the end of Section A, question 4 (Youth Culture, Stimulus

2) so the follow-up transition question used was:

*Entonces, ¿crees que es importante tener amigos?*

Which led onto a discussion naturally developed from elements of the candidates' responses, e.g: " *como has mencionado ...*

However in a minority of centres the use of the same questions for all candidates was clearly not suitable and resulted in an artificial question and answer session in which little attention was paid to the responses and there was no development of a natural conversation. This was true too in the small minority of cases where some candidates appeared to have over rehearsed their responses to questions for section B. This was evident where responses for the same candidates were significantly different in sections A and B. These candidates were penalised by receiving a maximum of 8 marks in the response criteria for lack of spontaneity. This was clearly indicated to relevant centres on the OR1 forms since such practice is not in the spirit

of the examination and contravenes the instructions they have been given both in the specification and oral training guide, the exemplar materials and also ICE document. This occurrence was rare and it was pleasing, however, that in most cases the candidates' responses were spontaneous, not recited, although with varying degrees of development in line with candidate performance at different levels of success.

There were isolated examples of incorrect use of stimulus cards and a mixture of the legacy unit 3 and the new specification unit 1 oral examinations together with, in one centre, questions in section B which were felt to be very inappropriate. Furthermore, the use of inappropriate questions in Section B is strongly discouraged and fails to put the candidates at ease and allow them to demonstrate their best language skills. It is recommended, therefore, that examiners ask more general questions, regarding young people for example, rather than personal ones on more sensitive topic areas e.g. *¿Por qué beben los jóvenes tanto hoy en día?*, rather than *¿por qué bebes?*

The vast majority of candidates chose the General Topic Area of Youth Culture and Concerns followed by Lifestyle, Health and Fitness. However it is highly recommended that candidates are encouraged to choose the General Topic Area of their choice which suits their own personal areas of interest to do well.

**Centres are reminded that the grade boundaries set for 6SP01 may change in the following exam series.**

#### Advice and Guidance

- Teacher/Examiners should adhere strictly to the timings for the examinations. Please note that oral examinations that are too short will be penalised according to the mark scheme and examiners are asked to stop assessing candidates after 10 minutes 30 seconds. The use of a stopwatch is highly recommended.
- The cassette tapes and CDs must be properly labelled with the name and number of the centre and sent with attendance registers and OR1 forms for all candidates. At the start of each tape the name and number of the centre must be recorded and at the start of each candidate his/her name and candidate number along with their chosen general topic area and the number of their stimulus must also be recorded. It is also helpful to number the candidates or the tapes so that the sequencing of stimuli can be verified.
- It is essential that care is taken with the recording of the tests. It is important that both the examiner and the candidate are audible and that interference from external noise is prevented. Examiners must ensure that the tape does not run out before the test is concluded. Recordings must be checked before being sent and if a candidate has not been recorded the examination must be conducted again with a different stimulus card.
- In Section A Teacher/Examiners should ask the four Edexcel-set questions exactly as they appear on the stimulus card and must not ask any supplementary questions or rephrase them in any way as this will result in the candidate being penalised for any responses they will then produce.

- It is best practice to make a clear and definite transition between section A and section B either by the use of a good “transition question” or by referring directly to it e.g. “hablemos ahora de otros temas” or “pasemos a la seccion B”.
- Teacher/Examiners should avoid the rigid use of a set of questions in Section B and should try to conduct as natural a conversation as possible, listening to the candidate and moving naturally away from the main focus of the stimulus in Section A allowing the candidate to develop their responses. It is not essential to cover all the sub-topics in the candidate’s chosen general topic area. Indeed it is preferable to explore only one or two in depth.
- Open questions should be used wherever possible to avoid answers that require only brief answers or in some cases simply “sí” or “no”.
- The teacher/examiner must not correct the candidate at any time during the test.
- Although it is more important that candidates are prepared to offer opinions and express their reactions to situations it is important that they are aware that they will be assessed also on the accuracy of their Spanish (8/50) and the range of their language (8/50) which means that points are awarded positively for candidates who are able to include some complexity in their responses. Clearly their ability to use complex language will depend to a large extent on the Teacher/Examiner providing them with the opportunity to do so.
- There was a broader range of ability and success than in the January 2009 series particularly with regard the accuracy of language. Common language errors tended to include the use of “gustar”, distinction between “ser”, “estar” and “haber” (e.g. “*esta un problema*”) and a failure to conjugate verbs even in the present tense (e.g. “*sus padres no conocer el ordenador*”).
- A large number of points (20/50) are awarded for the candidate’s ability to respond to the examiner’s questions and candidates should be encouraged to answer spontaneously, not learn a set of pre-learnt responses, and to develop their responses and sustain the conversation as much as they are able.

Centres that opt for Edexcel visiting examiners are reminded that it is the responsibility of the centres to:

- Provide appropriate rooms that can accommodate three people comfortably; the examiner, the candidate and the chaperone. The chaperone is not expected to sit with the Visiting Examiner and the candidates, however they should be in the same room. There were examples of rooms being too small to accommodate two people, let alone three people and recording equipment.
- Provide a chaperone who must sit in the room with the examiner and candidate but must not distract either or interrupt the test.
- Distribute the stimulus cards according to the sequencing stipulated in the Teacher/Examiner booklet.

## Spanish 6SP02/01 Unit 2: Understanding and Written Response

Candidates are required to read and listen to authentic Spanish material and to retrieve and convey information given in the material by responding to a range of mainly Spanish questions. In the last question, they are required to write 200 - 220 words in Spanish ( a letter, report or article) based on a short printed Spanish stimulus, involving the development of specific points from Spanish instructions.

In general, the candidates' answers reflected a positive response to this first sitting of the new specification. It was pleasing to see such a good performance in this first session. The majority of candidates were able to finish the paper within the allotted time.

### Assessment principles

Up to 40 marks are awarded positively for correct information, successfully retrieved and conveyed in response to the Spanish and English questions. The quality of language is only an assessment factor in so far as it impedes communication. Superfluous information, information not contained in the stimulus and self-contradictory combinations of correct and incorrect information cannot gain credit. The last question requiring an answer of 200 -220 words of Spanish is marked positively out of 30 using the grids printed in the syllabus and is marked for content and the quality of the language.

### Candidates' responses

#### Question 1

This was a listening text about the high speed AVE train, where candidates had to complete four statements, choosing each time from three possible endings. This question posed few problems for candidates, the vast majority gaining at least 3 out of 4 marks.

#### Question 2

This was a radio broadcast about alcohol problems among Latin American communities in the United States with particular reference to treatment. This required candidates to find four correct statements from a choice of eight. This was generally completed well with many candidates scoring 3 out of 4 marks.

#### Question 3

In this listening passage, candidates were asked to find the 4 correct words (out of a possible 8) to complete a summary of the text. No problems seemed to arise from this new question format, even though candidates now have to work with a summary rather than supply words from the transcript as in the old exam. On the whole this question was completed well, with candidates realising that they could narrow down the choice by looking at the grammar of the passage (e.g. (a) requires a masculine singular noun as it follows *un*, therefore the choices must be *curso* or *empleo*). Some candidates incorrectly guessed that students under stress should not *salir* rather than *hacer demasiado*.

#### Question 4

This was an interview with tennis champion, Rafael Nadal. Candidates were required to reply in Spanish to 6 questions. Candidates found little difficulty in retrieving the obvious information required in (a), (b) and (c) (although there was confusion over the time in (b) with some candidates having Nadal playing tennis first thing in the morning, at lunchtime and in the afternoon). Questions (d) and (e) proved to be good discriminators as weaker candidates were able to give the first part of the information, but could not say enough for the second mark. They could say that he is privileged but not that he feels *en deuda a la sociedad*, that he had taken part in humanitarian projects but not that it is from what he has seen first hand that he knows there are people who need help. Various incorrect, but understandable, spellings of *privilegiado* and *humanitario* were accepted. It was particularly obvious from this second element of (e), that weaker candidates were unable to manipulate language successfully in order to answer the question in the correct person: many tried to transcribe exactly what they heard but stumbled over *le* and *se* and in any case could not render the idea of his personal experience.

#### Question 5

This was an entirely new question type, however familiar to those who studied GCSE Spanish with Edexcel, where candidates had to read and match a series of statements with five people who were seeking advice from a problem page. This was the only reading question requiring a non-verbal response and on the whole was answered well.

#### Question 6

This required English answers to questions on a passage about climate change. Question 6(a) was answered correctly by almost all candidates, but many were fooled into thinking that sea levels were falling in (b) when the opposite was true. Question 6(c) brought a range of imaginative answers, as *granjeros* was not known by many. Answers included *Galicians*, *the people of Gran Canaria* and *old people*. A surprisingly large number of candidates thought that *animals* could qualify as a group of people. Forest (or bush) fires were identified by many in (d), although there was also smattering of *incidentes in the forests*. Poor English spelling robbed some of a mark in (e), where *droust* and *drowt* were acceptable, but the inevitable appearance of *draught* did not gain a mark.

#### Question 7

This was the most testing question on the paper with the longest reading text and answers required in Spanish. The subject was Venezuelan youth orchestras. Many candidates seemed to have been poorly prepared for this question and ignored the instruction to use *tus propias palabras*. As was the case with the old style reading paper, credit cannot be given for answers which are lifted directly from the text. Care is taken in the preparation of the paper to ensure that answers can be given using synonyms and/or different persons of the verb. *Niños y jóvenes con necesidades especiales* appeared often in (a) and a disappointingly large number of students ignored the obvious possibility in (b) of changing *la reparación y fabricación de instrumentos* into *reparar y fabricar instrumentos*. Few students seemed to recognise *la formación* as training, even though this is a word that has appeared in past exam questions several times. Question (c) produced some effective renderings such as *tocar instrumentos en otros países*. Question (d) was often answered

correctly, although *ratos* appeared many times to convey 'rates'. Weaker candidates did not gain any marks in (e) or (f) as they either lifted whole chunks of text or could not correctly manipulate the language. Many candidates did not understand the implication of (g) and therefore found it hard to put it into their own words. A change from *ha conseguido democratizar* to *ha democratizado* would have been enough for a mark. Overall, good candidates were easily identified by their willingness and ability to use their own original words, if only to a limited degree.

### Question 8

Candidates were asked to respond to a stimulus about the use of the Internet on trains, explaining the importance of the Internet in their own life, an occasion when they could not connect to the Internet and their opinion of the dangers of the Internet.

This seemed to be a subject with which the candidates could empathise. The majority had no shortage of ideas and most commented on all four bullet points. Far too many candidates ignored the word length limitations, however, and as a result some candidates lost marks on content as they failed to cover the four tasks within the word limit.

The first bullet point, asking for the candidate's own response to the Internet, was sometimes answered with a paragraph that was too general, explaining the importance of the Internet rather than how it affects the candidate personally. The second point about being unable to connect to the Internet was at times rather brief, along the lines of 'last week my computer was broken and I could not do my homework'. Good responses went further to develop this by explaining either how the candidate felt at the time or how the teacher reacted. The use of the past tense was where many answers started to fall down. *Pudo* and even *podiste* were often used for the first person and the pronoun with *conectar* was often left unchanged from the question, so combinations like *no puedo conectarte* abounded. There was confusion also between *podía* and *podría*. There were some wonderfully imaginative suggestions about how an Internet connection on the train could be useful. The best answers here gave ideas for how different types of people could use it, e.g. workers could contact the office, small children could play games to stop them getting bored on long journeys or there was a comment about how it might be a nuisance to other travellers. The word for businessman was often given as *empresa* or *negocio* and *útil* could be found used as a verb. As in previous series, it is surprising how many candidates misspell words given in the stimulus, e.g. *usario*. There were lots of risks mentioned for the fourth point, although some of these answers seemed rather pre-learned as if, alongside the first point, it were part of an essay on the pros and cons of the Internet.

**Centres are reminded that this is the first examination for this new specification, therefore the grade boundaries set for 6SP02 may change in the following exam series.**

### Advice and guidance

Candidates must be trained to read and comply with the rubric of the questions. It must be emphasised that penalties apply when the instructions to use one's own words or abide by a word-limit are ignored.

It is recommended that candidates be given plenty of practice with the preterite tense and verb and adjective agreement. Pronouns always cause problems, so work

on these would be beneficial. Exercises using synonyms and changing verbs from first to third person will also be of great help to candidates. The ability to use a variety of tenses is always rewarded as are idiomatic language and examples of the subjunctive. Care should be taken not to overuse these last two, however, as this can make writing sound unnatural and risk the loss of the overall message.

Candidates should read and listen to different styles of text. They should also be encouraged to write using different formats and registers (letters, articles, instructions etc.). They must, as a minimum, be able to recount events in the past and give an opinion.

Authentic Spanish texts should be used as often as possible and candidates given plenty of opportunity to practise listening to Spanish speech patterns so that they can avoid mistakes such as writing *a ser* for *hacer*.

Although knowledge of the countries and culture of the target language is not assessed, it is essential that candidates have a reasonable knowledge of Hispanic geography, life and culture. This will help in the understanding of texts that are taken from authentic sources.

Candidates are encouraged to write neatly and to take special care to differentiate between the letters a, e and o. This exam is marked on-line, so scripts that have been written in pencil or, worse, in pencil first and then over-written in ink, are very difficult to read.

## Statistics

### Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Spanish (6SP01)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Boundary Mark	50	40	35	30	26	22
Uniform Mark	60	48	42	36	30	24

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a Grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range 0-23.

The above boundary is applicable to options 1A and 1B.

### Unit 2: Understanding and Written Response in Spanish (6SP02)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Boundary Mark	70	56	50	44	38	33
Uniform Mark	140	112	98	84	70	56

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a Grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range 0-55.

### Advanced Subsidiary Cash in code - 8SP01

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Uniform Mark	200	160	140	120	100	80

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a Grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range 0-159.

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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