

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
in Spanish (6SP03/01) Paper 3

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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 teacher/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 a total mark of 50.

### **Response (20 marks)**

There are three descriptors in this box:

- Spontaneity - Is the discourse spontaneous or pre-learnt? 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 prearranged 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.

### **Candidates' performance**

Most centres are now very familiar with what is required of this unit and their candidates were well-prepared. There was a 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 illustrate this point.

1. Some teacher/examiners did not observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination adversely affecting the candidate's marks. Some presentations were too long. Some debates were short (under 4 minutes) and some were long and went even up to 7 minutes.

2. Some teacher/examiners spent too long on the initial issue and the first topic that they had little time to develop a second one.
3. In some cases the initial issue was conducted as a knowledge test rather than debated. If the teacher/examiner did not challenge the candidate's stance the appropriate penalty cap was applied, as per the marking guidance sheet, (see end of report for marking guidance).
4. Some teacher/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 candidate's 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 the test, and how they are going to be treated, constitutes the unpredictable nature of the assessment and thereby ensures that candidates' responses are spontaneous.
5. Candidates will not score highly if teacher/examiners use the same set of topics and questions for all candidates.
6. 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 teacher/examiner.

### **Part 1 - The Debate**

The more able candidates had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support their arguments. They also had a good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. Less able 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.

### **Part 2 - The Discussion**

In this part of the test the more able 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 of oral tests noted by our examiners:

Chosen Issue: *"Contra la donación de órganos"*

Follow up areas:

- Cloning for medical purposes
- Technological and scientific advances
- The technological gap between developing and developed countries.

Chosen Issue: *"A favor de permanecer en la Unión Europea"*

Follow up areas:

- UKIP policies on immigration
- Globalisation

Occasionally some teacher/examiners neglected to focus on the important aspect of the discussion that entails an interaction between two people. Instead some teacher/examiners simply went through the motions of merely 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 as many as 10 un-connected topics were covered. These examinations were more interviews than discussions and resulted in a series of long monologues. This is not what is expected or required of the test and goes against the spirit of the assessment.

Very occasionally the teacher/examiner spoke as much as the candidates not leaving the candidate much room to say anything meaningful and in consequence disadvantaged him/her when it came to judging his/her performance.

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 candidate's 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*, as published in the GCE Spanish specification.

However, for a candidate to access the higher marks, 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 issue to debate but where there were too many topics to discuss, most of them were more suited to an AS exam.

Initial issue: *"En contra de la Monarquía"*

Further topics for the discussion:

- *los famosos*
  - *la imagen*
  - *la anorexia*
  - *la vida sana*
  - *el ejercicio*
  - *la Educación Física en los colegios*
2. An example of an exam that had well thought out, different and well-structured arguments to the debate, *'En contra de la eutanasia'*
    - *Pienso que hay muchos argumentos en contra de la eutanasia como decir que atenta contra el derecho a la vida, que los médicos están para salvar la vida y no para terminarla. Pienso también que la eutanasia desvaloriza la vida de los minusválidos y desincentiva los tratamientos paliativos. Sin embargo para mí el argumento más fuerte es el religioso y en este debate quiero concentrarme solamente en este aspecto. Estoy totalmente de acuerdo con las enseñanzas de las religiones como la Cristiana o el Islam que dicen que la vida es un don de Dios, es sagrada y debe ser protegida.*
    - *Estoy de acuerdo que la religión hoy en día no tiene mucha importancia para muchos. Por ejemplo la religión católica era la predominante en Bélgica, pero ahora su influencia es menor, y por la inmigración el Islam es casi más importante. Sin embargo, aunque a esto Bélgica se ha convertido en el primer país del mundo que autoriza la eutanasia infantil sin límite de edad.*
    - *Yo sé que hay enfermos terminales que sufren pero yo soy una persona religiosa y creo que el sufrimiento forma parte de nuestro destino y que deberíamos aceptar que Dios nos está mandando. La fe nos ayuda a llevar este dolor.*

- *Hoy, la gente en los países ricos, piensa que no debemos aguantar nada en absoluto y que tenemos que rebelarnos contra el menor contratiempo. Según ellos, el sufrimiento, el aguantar y el sacrificio, son cosas del pasado, que la vida moderna ha superado totalmente.*
- *En estos países ricos una vida feliz, es una vida sin sufrimiento ninguno. Lo que ellos no tienen en cuenta es que en los países pobres la vida es diferente. Hay más pobreza, privaciones y sufrimientos pero eso no quiere decir que hay menos felicidad.*
- *En todas partes vemos que hay personas que actúan como inspiración, por ejemplo Steven Hawking que está paralizado y tiene una vida llena y aparece en programas de la televisión. Claro, él es muy inteligente y famoso pero podemos ver muchas personas por todo el mundo que nos pueden inspirar.*
- *Si yo conociera a una persona que quiere recurrir a la eutanasia lo que yo haría sería ofrecer todo mi apoyo, mi cariño y amor. Haría que se sienta querida y valorada. Muchas veces el sentimiento de estar sola, sin amor contribuye a la decisión de querer terminar con su vida.*
- *Yo diría a una persona que, ella debería seguir con su vida y aceptar el sufrimiento porque esto actúa como una prueba. Además trataría de explicar que para muchas personas como mí, este mundo no tiene mucha importancia y el mundo próximo tiene más importancia.*

3. An example of an exam that had suitable A Level questions relating to drugs, a common AS topic.

- *¿Cuáles crees que son las razones por las que muchos jóvenes consumen drogas?*
- *¿Cuáles pueden ser las consecuencias de consumir drogas?*
- *¿En qué forma crees que drogarse afecta a la sociedad y no solamente al individuo?*
- *¿Estás de acuerdo con los que dicen que, legalizar las drogas blandas llevaría a que haya más adictos y daría el mensaje de que drogarse es normal y aceptable?*
- *¿Por qué crees que el alcohol no es socialmente considerado como una droga?*

The teacher/examiner continued with the second topic for the discussion, asking questions exploring something touched on in the candidate's response:

- *'Has mencionado que una consecuencia de drogarse es que conlleva un coste a la sanidad pública. Con todos los recortes que el gobierno*

*ha hecho últimamente, ¿cuáles crees que son los principales problemas que tiene la sanidad pública hoy?*

### **Native or near-native speakers**

It was noted by our Examiners that there were many native or near native speakers taking this examination. However, not all of them scored high marks. This was often because they had done little or no preparation at all for the examination relying solely on the quality of their spoken language to pull them through.

Many candidates appeared to be from South America and although there are indeed some differences, for example in vocabulary, depending on the country from which they originate, our Examiners were aware of these and gave due consideration to all Hispanic alternatives as entirely appropriate.

### **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 in the previous series, the most popular issues were abortion (specially the new Abortion Law in Spain), euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration, homosexual marriages and the legalisation of drugs.

Some other interesting issues presented this year were:

- *A favor de la investigación con células madre*
- *Estoy en contra de la fracturación hidráulica*
- *Estoy a favor (o en contra) de la educación en casa*
- *A favor de UKIP y sus leyes sobre la inmigración*
- *En contra de la independencia de Escocia*
- *En contra del precio del seguro de coche para menores de 25 años*
- *Contra el derecho al voto de los presos*
- *A favor del lado israelí en el conflicto de las naciones árabes e Israel*
- *En contra de los proyectos de trenes de alta velocidad en Inglaterra*
- *A favor de controlar la prensa*
- *A favor de la fecundación in vitro*
- *A favor de la comida transgénica*

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

- A favor de que las mujeres tengan los mismos derechos que los hombres
- En contra de la homofobia en las escuelas
- A favor de la vida sana
- En contra de las revistas de cotilleo

## The Discussion

Popular current follow-up topics were:

- The role of the monarchy
- Europe
- Terrorism
- The economic crisis
- Climate change
- Animals used for experimentation
- Globalization
- The importance of religion nowadays.

## Quality of language

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

More able 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 hidraráulica/ 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 / policía / problema / variedad / sociedad / Europa / eutanasia.*

Also the incorrect pronunciation of the silent 'h'. For example: alcohol became "*alcojol*" / *ahorrar* became "*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: *restringir, afrontar, acceder, permitir, suportar, promover, resolver.*

## Teacher Examiner's performance

### 4. Conduct of the examination

Most teacher/examiners conducted excellent tests. They had carefully read the ***Edexcel Oral Training Guide***, the Examiner's report from 2013 as well as the ***Teacher/Examiner Handbook*** and followed all the guidelines.

To reward the candidate's ability to understand spoken Spanish these teacher/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 and asked long and some quite convoluted questions, interrupted/corrected the candidate or, dominated the exchange. Unfortunately, this was to the disadvantage of their candidates.

In these circumstances, Teacher/Examiners who are unfamiliar or inexperienced with the conduct of the oral assessments are recommended to attend one of the online training events for the Unit 1 and Unit 3 oral assessments that can be found on the Pearson/Edexcel website.

<http://www.edexcel.com/resources/Training/Pages/default.aspx?cgrp=Teaching%20support>

## Timing

The specification is clear about the timing required for the Unit 3 exam. In Part 1 (the debate), the candidate should introduce his/her stance for up to 1 minute, (it is not essential that the candidate uses the whole minute for this) after which the teacher/examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the teacher/examiner moves on to the discussion section (Part 2). The whole oral should last between 11 -13 minutes.

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 our Examiners stopped listening at the end of the next sentence once 13 minutes had passed.

## 5. Centre Performance

### Recording

The tests sent from centres were recorded appropriately on CDs and USBs. A few centres sent cassettes although it was mentioned that they will not be acceptable from 2014 onwards\*.

On the whole CDs and USBs were well labeled, well packaged and arrived undamaged accompanied by the **OR3 oral form** correctly filled in and the attendance register.

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

Before sending the CD to our Examiner it is important that the Centre double checks that all recordings have been saved successfully on the digital format.

***\*NB: Please note that further to the notification on the Pearson/Edexcel website, and via the updates from the Subject Advisor, Mr Alistair Drewery, we will no longer be accepting audio cassettes for assessment from September 2014 onwards.***

## **Documentation**

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

## **6. Teacher Examiners**

### **Advice and Guidance**

- Teacher/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, such as, '*Estoy a favor de..*' '*Estoy en contra de..*'.
- Candidates need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments.
- Teacher/Examiners should challenge the candidate's 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 sheet.
- 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. In particular a minimum marks allocation for Response.
- Teacher/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.
- Teacher/Examiners must make sure that the second part of the exam is not a re-run of the Unit 1 oral test. For candidates to access the higher marks they must show progression from AS to A2.
- Teacher/Examiners must remember that the second part of the exam is a discussion not a debate.
- Teacher/Examiners should not introduce too many follow-up issues to allow the candidate 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.

- Teacher/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

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

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds (including a 30 second tolerance).

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 for Response, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. A similar adjustment would be made to the mark for Comprehension and Development. This adjustment should not be applied to marks for 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/sense group.

#### 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 one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 12 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 8 marks

Reading and research	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 4 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 3 marks

Comprehension and development	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 10 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 7 marks

**Spontaneity/Response**

A performance which is, in the marker's view, *largely* recited, and demonstrates *very little* spontaneity as well as impaired intonation may suggest pre-learning. If the examiner believes that a test has been pre-learnt then the mark for **Response** will be limited to 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

A pre-learnt test may also affect the mark given for **Comprehension and Development** if it does not permit a natural and logical interaction.

It is important that the PE and team leaders can see clearly the justification for marks awarded and examiners should note briefly on the OR3 form the reason for any caps which are applied in marking an oral test.

**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>

