

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE Spanish (5SP02)
Unit 2: Speaking in Spanish

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Unit 2: Speaking in Spanish (5SP02)

Summer 2010 is the first time that this unit has been assessed. In subsequent examination series, this unit will be available in January and June. Please refer to the specification for further details.

The new Specification examination has changed significantly from the old GCSE Specification. The role-plays have gone and the assessments are now all based on prepared material, the first prepared and the second unprepared. Candidates now have up to 2 weeks and/or 6 hours to prepare each task and there is no longer any distinction between Foundation and Higher candidates since all oral tests are marked following the same assessment grids and the results are by outcome. The new Specification oral tests can be conducted at any time during the course and are no longer confined to a window of examining as in the past. Each oral test now takes between 4 and 6 minutes.

As in the past, the oral tests are positively marked but there are important changes to the Assessment grids. Under the old Specification, there was unequal weighting between content and language with two grids for language assessment (Application and Accuracy) each marked out of 10 and one grid for Communication and Content, also out of 10. 20 marks were awarded for language and only 10 for Content. This has changed dramatically under the new Specification with up to 18 marks available for Content and Response and up to 6 marks each for Range and Accuracy of Language. The descriptors in the assessment grids have also been re-written and for Content and Response examiners are now listening for a substantial amount of detailed information willingly offered by the candidate, evidence of interaction and spontaneity with the Teacher Examiner, the expression and justification of opinions and the ability to deal with unpredictable elements as they arise. Candidates who take the initiative and develop elaborate responses are rewarded.

Candidates must take two oral assessments based on two different task types chosen from 1) An Open Interaction - an unscripted role-play - 2) A Presentation or 3) A Picture-based Discussion. All the tests are marked internally by the Teacher Examiner and only one recorded test is submitted for external moderation by Edexcel for those candidates identified by asterisk on the Optems for each centre. For centres where there is more than one Teacher Examiner it is essential, therefore, that a process of internal standardisation takes place before recordings are submitted.

Based on those who entered this summer, it became clear that candidates are now much better prepared to cope with the demands of the new examination and even less able candidates performed more confidently. As well as the intensive preparation, Candidates were also encouraged by having the opportunity to take ownership of the tasks, choosing their own Topic Areas, Task Types and their own pictures or topics for presentation. Several of the Teacher Examiners observed good practice and listened carefully to their candidates, building on what they said, creating interesting and varied conversations and helping to push their candidates gently towards their linguistic ceiling. Open rather than closed questions gave the Candidates opportunity to produce detailed, imaginative responses and more complex questions and time frames helped the abler candidates to demonstrate their competence over a variety of tenses and structures.

However, there were some administrative problems. Some centres did not send the required documentation. Both copies of the completed Optems should be supplied; in a few cases, some supplied blank Optems forms. Regarding the other necessary documents some failed to provide copies of the stimuli and others did not supply the Candidate Notes Form (CA2). Guidance about what to send with the recordings was stated in the 'Instruction for the Conduct of the Examination - Summer 2010' pages 8 - 12.

All centres chose to prepare tasks related to topics recommended by Edexcel; there were no examples of centre-devised options. As expected, Travel and Tourism was the most popular topic followed by Sport and Leisure and Media and Culture. There were no examples of Business, Work and Employment. The most popular task type was the picture-based discussion, in particular focused on holidays. The introductions all fell within one minute and several of the discussions that followed were interesting and detailed. It was good to see Candidates taking ownership of the task by providing their own photographs or pictures. Some Candidates were given lengthy preparation sheets listing all the possible questions that they might be faced with and so allowing no possibility of unpredictability. As a consequence the maximum they could score for Content and Response was 3 since, according to the assessment grid, there needs to be an element of unpredictability to qualify for 4 marks and above.

A few Candidates chose to offer open interactions and these were conducted according to Edexcel requirements. Similarly the few presentations were within the time recommended but it became clear that while able candidates made full use of the maximum time available some of the less able tended to struggle after about a minute. Teacher Examiners are reminded to help their candidates pick the most appropriate task for their skill level.

Most of the tests were accurately marked and the clarity of the assessment grids makes the assessment easy to follow. Most of the recordings were clear and several were supplied on CD rather than cassette - no doubt a welcome trend for the future. The candidates in general were more comfortable with the new examination, had prepared well and showed much more confidence. The tests were conducted in an encouraging and sympathetic manner giving the candidates plenty of opportunity to demonstrate their linguistic competence over a wide range of vocabulary, tenses and structures.

Recommendations for future examinations

1. All Teacher Examiners should read the 'Instruction for the Conduct of the Examination', and also the 'Controlled Assessment Teacher Support book - Speaking' for further guidance. Both documents are available to download from www.edexcel.com on the subject specific Spanish page.
2. Please ensure that the following are submitted:
 - a) The recordings - 1 per candidate - clearly recorded with the microphone favouring the candidate rather than the Teacher Examiner and the volume and tone controls turned down.
 - b) The 2 yellow copies of the Optems forms - Optems A with the marks recorded for all Candidates in the centre including those orals that are not being submitted for

moderation. Optems B containing the marks for all Candidates in the centre including those that are submitted for moderation.

c) Candidates who are submitted for moderation, copies of the stimulus are submitted.

d) The Authenticity Record Forms for all the Candidates whose orals are being moderated - signed by both the candidate and the teacher.

e) Copies of the CA2 Candidate preparation forms containing the 30 words / 5 pictures maximum that the Candidate used as a prompt during the test.

2. If more than one Teacher Examiner is conducting the orals within a centre then a co-ordinated system of moderation must take place to ensure that there is standardisation of marking within the centre. Edexcel will moderate the centre, not individual examiners, and if marking is found to be inaccurate or inconsistent then the whole centre's marks will be affected.

3. Candidates must not know in advance all the questions that are likely to be asked during the oral. The Content and Response assessment grid specifically mentions 'unpredictable elements' and candidates will lose marks heavily if there is no unpredictability.

4. Teacher Examiners should listen carefully to what the candidates are saying and interact accordingly rather than rely on a list of prepared questions. The conversations or discussions should be as natural as possible and not simply a question and answer session.

5. Make sure that timings are strictly adhered to - 4 to 6 minutes per test. Up to 3 minutes is allowed for the candidate to present their topic if they are offering the Presentation task but do remember that there must be interaction between the Teacher Examiner and the candidate if they are to access the higher marks. Up to 1 minute is allowed for the candidate to introduce a picture-based discussion. If the candidate is likely to go beyond these time limits, it is important for the Teacher Examiner to interrupt and initiate some interaction. A stopwatch is recommended for use when conducting the oral tests.

Moderation Marking Principles

Tests which are too short: < less than 3'30" - so 3'29 " is too short

- Automatic deduction of 2 marks on the Content and Response grid.
- There is no penalty applied to either Range or Accuracy.

Test which are too long: > more than 6 minutes

- Stop listening and assessing at the end of the first sentence after 6 minutes have elapsed

Test which are a monologue and have no interaction

- No more than 7 for Content and Response
- There is no penalty applied for either Range or Accuracy

Open interaction tasks only

- Candidate asks only one question - deduct 1 mark from the Content and Response (where two or more questions are clearly required)
- Candidate asks no questions - deduct 2 marks from the Content and Response.

Marks for content and language are awarded discretely - i.e. if a candidate scores 8-11 for content, there is no imposed ceiling on either of the other assessment boxes for range or accuracy.

These are the only penalties to be applied. Pro-rata calculations from other specifications or languages should not be used.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw mark boundary	60	50	44	38	32	29	26	24	22	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	90	81	72	63	54	45	36	27	18	0

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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