



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International A Level

In Spanish (WSP03)

Unit 3: Understanding and spoken response

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Publications Code WSP03_01_2506_ER

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Format of the test

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections and lasts between 11 and 13 minutes.

The first section is a debate and requires candidates to present and to take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. The examiner then plays devil's advocate, adopts the opposite view to the candidate and provides 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 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.

In this 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.

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 40.

Spontaneity and development - 20 marks

Is the discourse spontaneous and to what extent?

Discourse is the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the teacher and the examiner developing the line of argument and exploring it in more depth. In practice, this means that each participant addresses the points made by the other responding appropriately to each other's input, whether that be a question, a comment, or a remark.

Candidates will score well here if the test is a genuine discourse and not a sequence of questions and answers covering several topics.

There should also be evidence of challenging questions required to demonstrate that candidates have engaged in a discussion and debate at an appropriate intellectual level for A Level.

Are the responses well developed? Can candidates respond demonstrating understanding? Can candidates independently sustain the development of ideas? Can candidates develop the discussion by offering longer contributions that lead to further paths for development?

Development is appropriately expanding on an idea and point of view. This can be in the form of justification, illustration, exemplification, clarification, comparison of the candidate's ideas and views.

Quality of Language – Accuracy 5 marks

This box assesses accuracy of language, pronunciation, and intonation.

Quality of Language – Range 5 marks

Does the candidate have a good range of lexis and sentence structures appropriate to the issues discussed? Is the language authentically used?

Reading and research - 5 marks

This box only assesses the candidate's level of research and awareness of the chosen issue for debate. Candidates need to undertake thorough research into their chosen issue to be able to formulate their opinion, justify their arguments and give examples to illustrate their answers.

To be able to access the top mark bands (4 and 5) candidates will have to mention target language newspaper and magazine articles, online sources, or any other suitable target language written source that they have used.

Critical analysis- 5 marks

Candidates will be assessed here on their ability to handle abstract concepts, not purely concrete exchanges. There will be a critical analysis of key issues and justified links between ideas, with coherent arguments mostly present that show a developing individual response. There should be evidence of deeper thinking and understanding of different sides to an argument, often illustrating their points with facts and figures. The discussions should be about ideas, not purely factual, narrative, or descriptive.

The issues discussed which relate to the three specific IAL general topic areas must refer to the Spanish speaking world.

The Marking Guidance for Oral Examiners can be found on the website in the Course materials section.

Candidates' performance

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 examiner conducts the examination. The following observations from tests submitted by our examiners this summer illustrate this point.

Some examiners failed to challenge the candidates during the first part of the exam and conducted the initial issue as a knowledge test rather than as a proper debate. If the examiner did not challenge the candidate's stance the appropriate marking principles were applied, as per the General Marking Guidance.

Some examiners had clearly prepared their challenging questions and followed their planned line of questioning not responding to or picking up in any way what the candidates said. There was no sense of interaction/discourse between the examiner and candidate and, even though questions were often challenging, the discussion followed a question-and-answer format.

This lack of discourse and development did not allow the candidate to reach high marks for Spontaneity and development and Critical Analysis.

It was noted that in some instances, the discussions in Section B mirrored those in Section A. It is important to emphasize the distinction between Section A and Section B to ensure candidates provide distinct content and approaches for each section.

Despite the above, it was pleasing to note that most examiners conducted the tests correctly. Also, that many candidates approached the test with confidence and responded readily and fluently to most questions asked and they were able to develop their replies without too much reliance on, or prompting from, the examiner.

The debate

Most candidates chose a suitable issue for their debate which meant they could interact effectively with the examiner, defend their views, and use the language of debate, analysis, and argument. They also had good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. The best candidates had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments, and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support their arguments.

Unfortunately, many high scoring candidates did not mention any target language written sources or just quoted university or institution studies without mentioning the source where these articles were published and therefore, they were unable to score any higher than a 3 in this section of the exam.

Weaker performing candidates simply relied on assertion, generalisations, or personal experiences or conviction to pull through and consequently all too often ran out of ideas and tended to repeat their arguments.

There were some cases where this part of the exam was not conducted as a debate but merely as a discussion in which the examiner sought information from the candidates on their topic.

Noted by one of our examiners, the most successful candidates engaged in a lively exchange of ideas and opinion, which showed varying degrees of agreement and disagreement, acknowledgement of the examiner's point of view and a full and frank exchange of views and opinions.

The discussion

Excellent examining was heard from many centres where 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 followed a natural course in ensuing 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, some facts or figures and develop their responses.

In some cases, many unconnected topics were covered, and the examinations were more interviews than discussions which resulted in a Question-and-Answer session. Consequently, candidates were unable to explore the topics in sufficient scope and depth. It is advisable to limit the number of topics to ensure candidates can engage in thorough analysis and provide comprehensive responses.

The follow-up areas for this part of the examination (the discussion) can be chosen from the General Topic Area for AS. Also, from the Additional General Topic Areas for A Level but these areas must refer to the Spanish speaking world.

AS topics visited at A Level should be considered in greater depth and answers given to questions should clearly indicate progression from AS to A Level. Sometimes, 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 AS speaking test and thereby not giving the candidates any chance to develop their response appropriately.

It is difficult to show progression from AS to A Level with questions such as:

Describe tu región favorita, Describe una fiesta de tu región. ¿Cuáles son las mejores tapas de España? Also, personal questions such as ¿Te gusta aprender idiomas? ¿Es importante hacer deporte? ¿Qué deportes practicas? ¿Dónde te gustaría trabajar en el futuro?

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 other years, the most popular issues were pro/against death penalty, abortion, surrogate pregnancy, euthanasia, cannabis legalization, bullfighting, and animal testing.

Some unusual but nevertheless successful topics were for/against the use of space exploration, the legalisation of firearms, the use of lithium batteries in electric vehicles, electronic cigarettes, AI, transgender people competing in sports and hunting.

Similarly, to past years, to be against social media or technology in general has proven to be an inadequate topic to create a good debate since a life without technology differs completely from today's reality. However, when presented within a specific context such as: in favour of or against the use of social media for under twelve years old, or in favour of or against young children having a mobile phone, the topic of technology and social media can be a very strong topic for the debate.

Unsuitable issues were often ones which were not easily debated and led to generalised comments for which the examiners found it difficult to present counterarguments such as:

in favour of Spanish art, in favour of doing sports, in favour of prohibiting the consumption of alcohol and drugs.

Conduct of the examination

Most examiners conducted excellent tests. They 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 examiners spoke too much, asked long and sometimes 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, the candidate should introduce his or her stance for up to 1 minute after which the examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the 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. Too long debates do not leave enough time to develop the second part of the exam.

In the cases where the tests were short the appropriate marking principles were applied, as per the General Marking Guidance 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.

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 research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments during the whole debate not only during their presentation. They must also make sure that they mention the target written language sources they have used.
- 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.
- Examiners should not introduce too many follow up issues to allow the candidate to produce depth of discussion and development of opinions.
- 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 Spontaneity and Development and Critical thinking. Please note questions can be linguistically challenging or conceptually challenging. Complexity can be achieved through the response individual questions require.
- Candidates must show evidence of deeper thinking. There should be critical analysis of key issues and justified links between ideas, substantiated with coherent arguments and insightful observations.

- The candidate and the examiner should respond appropriately to each other's input, there must be a sense of interaction/discourse between them. The discussion should not follow a question-and-answer format. To reach the full range of marks in Spontaneity and Development there should be frequent examples of spontaneous discourse.
- 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
- 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 refer to the General Marking Guidance for this unit.

Administrative matters

Schools are politely requested to use the following file naming format for the audio files:

Candidate number, Candidate name

In this way, candidates are ordered by candidate number and examiners can quickly find the recording for each candidate. If other formats are used, it can be very difficult and time-consuming for examiners to find the correct files.

Conclusion

Most centres had prepared their candidates well, so they had a good understanding of the requirements of this unit. The examiners marking this unit appreciated the efforts that the teachers had made to allow their candidates to reach their full potential.

