



GCSE
Spanish

8698/SF Paper 1 Speaking Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

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General comments

The examination discriminated well and there was a wide range as far as the quality of students' performances was concerned. Some did so well in the General conversation that they would have scored a good mark for it at Higher tier. On the other hand, there were some students who said very little or nothing in the whole test.

Overall, students did well in both the Role-play and the Photo card and they had been well prepared by their teachers. This was especially noticeable in the Photo card, where students had been trained to prepare the three seen questions by using three verbs in each one.

In the General conversation, there was a wide range of types of performance and of conduct by the teacher. On the whole, teachers adapted to the ability of the student doing the test and to the relative nervousness of their students. It was encouraging to see teachers sympathetically coaxing their more nervous students through the General conversation in order that they performed to the best of their ability. Some students had clearly learnt answers to questions off by heart and this sometimes worked in their favour. However, sometimes what the student had tried to learn was clearly beyond their linguistic capability and their marks suffered as a result.

As always, the conduct of the test can have a bearing on the marks awarded to students. The conduct was generally good. However, there were many instances of students losing marks unnecessarily, especially in the Role-play and General conversation, but also in the Photo card. In the Role-play, this was because teachers did not adhere to the script and reworded or shortened the printed question in their role. In these instances, the student's response for that task received no marks. In the Photo card, teachers are allowed to paraphrase the question, but sometimes the alternative version used was not a paraphrase or it was a shortened form of the question. Again, when this happened, the student's response was not credited. The issue in the General conversation was with timing and this sometimes led to a loss of marks.

Examiners had to use a Speaking Scoresheet in order to arrive at fair and consistent marks for all students. A copy of this can be found at the end of the mark scheme.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. The feedback is provided on the basis of need only and will not be necessary for every centre.

A breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test for each student in your centre is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via Centre Services.

Role-plays

Teachers should keep to the script of the Role-play because failure to do so will result in a student's response to a particular task being discounted. It is not acceptable to repeat part of a prompt. For example, in Role-play 7, the unexpected question was *¿Adónde vas con tus amigos?* If a student did not understand the question, it was acceptable for the teacher to repeat the full question. However, it was not acceptable for the teacher simply to repeat the key question word *¿Adónde?* Had this type of change to the prompt been accepted, it would have provided an unfair advantage to those students because it made the task easier. So, as always, teachers are reminded that they must keep to their script.

If students prepared sufficiently well in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have had notes which they could read out once they moved on to the next task. Sometimes it seemed that they were not doing that or that they had not made notes. It still appears that many students are reluctant to read from their notes or that they do not write out exactly what they are going to say for the four prepared tasks. As part of exam technique training, they should be encouraged to do this.

At this tier, there is no need to use any tense other than present in the Role-play. Some tasks will still be fulfilled if a past or future reference is made, but it should be discouraged because errors resulting in a loss of marks are often made when other tenses are attempted needlessly.

The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero marks per task.

The mark for Knowledge and use of language usually corresponded with the mark for Communication. For example, 8 for Communication would usually result in a mark of 4 for Knowledge and use of language.

Teachers are encouraged not to use English during the course of the test. The mark scheme says: 'If, in any part of the test, the teacher either asks a question or gives a prompt in English, you must ignore the student's reply'. In the Role-play, it is acceptable for the teacher to prompt the question task by saying to the student: *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?* or something similar in Spanish. However, if the teacher asks in English 'Have you got a question?', whatever the student says will score zero, as clearly stated in the mark scheme.

In the question-asking task, the student must ask a question. It cannot be in the form of an imperative, such as *Describe ...* or *Háblame de ...*

Below are some detailed comments on each of the Role-plays:

Role-play 1

Task a

Opinion-giving tasks were generally well done and that was true here.

Task b

Question words were often not known well and that was the case here with *¿con quién?*

Task c

This unprepared task was done well by those students who understood *¿Cuántos días?*, but many did not.

Task d

Well done by the majority. The adjective *peligroso* seems to have been learnt by many students and it was quite common to hear it in this task.

Task e

There were five question-asking tasks where the student needed to mention a country in order to score 2 marks. That was the case here and some asked a question about sport, but omitted to mention *Nicaragua*, which meant they scored 1 mark.

Role-play 2**Task a**

This was done very well.

Task b

Sometimes students tried to be over-ambitious in what they tried to say and they did not communicate the message clearly. Those who kept things simple did well, by saying things like *Las fotos son divertidas*.

Task c

Misunderstanding of *¿Cuántas horas?* was quite common.

Task d

Question words were often not known well and that was the case here with *¿a quién?*

Task e

This question-asking task was done well on the whole.

Role-play 3**Task a**

Students who did well on this task usually scored 2 marks by saying *Tengo/hay cinco clases*. However, the prompt on the Candidate's role was not understood by a good number of students.

Task b

This was not done well, usually because students appeared not to understand *¿A qué hora?*

Task c

This was done well, mainly because positive opinions were accepted for 2 marks.

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

This was done quite well, although some did not mention Bolivia in their question.

Role-play 4

Task a

This was done well, as were most opinion-giving tasks.

Task b

Some students seemed not to understand *novio/novia* and either did not give an answer or gave an inappropriate one such as *Es azul*. Those who understood the question tended to score 2 marks, by giving either a physical description or a character trait.

Task c

This was one of the least well done question-asking tasks. Those who did well on it tended to ask *¿Tienes planes para el matrimonio?*

Task d

If *¿dónde?* was understood, this was done well. Some students clearly did not understand what it meant, however.

Task e

This was done well.

Role-play 5

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

Misunderstanding of *¿Cuántas clases?* was quite common.

Task c

This was done well by most students. Any activity was allowed, school-related or not.

Task d

This was done well, as were most opinion-giving tasks.

Task e

Some students gained just one mark here because they left out any reference to Spain.

Role-play 6

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

¿Cuántas? was often not understood.

Task c

This was done well by those who answered. Generally they said things like *Me gusta(n)*. Sometimes students did not give an answer, presumably because they did not understand *horas flexibles*.

Task d

This was one of the better done unprepared tasks.

Task e

This was one of the least well done question-asking tasks.

Role-play 7

Task a

This was done very well.

Task b

As in other role-plays, *¿cuántos?* was often not understood.

Task c

The question was often interpreted as meaning ‘What do you do with your friends?’. Answers such as *Juego al tenis* were not accepted.

Task d

Many students could not communicate a positive aspect successfully.

Task e

This question-asking task was done quite well.

Role-play 8

Task a

In this type of transactional role-play, it is very useful for students to know *quiero* or *me gustaría*. Those who knew them did well on this task.

Task b

Talla was known much better than it was in a similar role-play task in 2023.

Task c

Many did not score a mark because they did not understand *quién*.

Task d

This was done very well.

Task e

There are still a lot of students who don't know how to say *¿Cuánto es?*, which was the most straightforward way to fulfil this task.

Role-play 9**Task a**

This was not done well. It was probably due to not understanding *mejor aspecto* or *barrio* or both.

Task b

This was not done well, usually because students appeared not to understand *¿A qué hora?*

Task c

Students often tried to say things which were beyond their linguistic knowledge and did not communicate. Those who did well kept to simple opinions such as *Es importante* or *Es bueno*.

Task d

This proved quite challenging for some. However, other students knew phrases such as *Reciclo plástico/botellas* and comfortably scored 2 marks.

Task e

Some students gained just one mark here because they left out any reference to Spain.

Photo cards

Many teachers had prepared their students very well for this part of the exam. They had clearly read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme, which deals with the marking of the Photo card, and passed this information on successfully to their students. Any teachers who are not fully aware of how the Photo card is marked are strongly recommended to read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme and to look at the examples that are given for the award of different marks.

Teachers are allowed to paraphrase the questions in this part of the exam, but the same meaning must be maintained, or the student's answer is not credited. For example, the fourth question on Photo card E was *¿Cuál es tu opinión de ir de vacaciones en coche?* If a teacher paraphrased by asking *¿Qué piensas de ir de vacaciones en coche?*, this was fine because exactly the same meaning was maintained. However, *¿Te gusta ir de vacaciones en coche?* was not allowed because it is not a paraphrase – it can be answered by *Sí* or *No*, which the aforementioned two questions cannot. In addition, extra words such as *en el pasado* or *actividades* cannot be added to the printed questions, nor can words or phrases be repeated within the question, for example in the third question on Photo card A: *¿Qué hiciste en tu pueblo ayer ... ayer?*

Some questions on the Photo cards are followed by *¿Por qué?* For those that are not, if the teacher follows up by asking *¿Por qué?*, any subsequent reason given is not accepted.

Questions differentiated well, with a wide range in the quality of answers, but there were some that were done noticeably less well than others. These were the ones which students found most challenging:

Photo card A

Describe tu barrio.

The word *barrio* was sometimes not known.

Photo card B

¿Con quién te llevas mejor en tu grupo de amigos? ... ¿Por qué?

Students often seemed reluctant to give the name of a friend, which was the intention of the first question. It was in giving a reason that students could develop their answer, as many did.

Photo card D

This card generally proved more difficult for students compared to the other ones. The topics of Social issues and Global issues are ones that students seem less able to speak about, although they are often covered in the General conversation.

Photo card E

Y, tu región, ¿es buena para los turistas? ... ¿Por qué (no)?

A good number of students thought that this was asking if they thought that tourists were a good thing.

Photo card F

¿Qué nuevo hobby te gustaría hacer en el futuro? ... ¿Por qué?

The word *hobby* was often not known by students, despite it being a cognate. Many teachers repeated the question, substituting *hobby* with *pasatiempo*, which was perfectly acceptable as a paraphrase.

Photo card I

¿Qué te gusta hacer con tu dinero?

This was often not answered correctly or was not answered at all.

General conversation

The standard of the General conversation varied greatly and there were some impressive performances for this tier. At the other end of the spectrum, there were students who could say nothing or very nearly nothing.

Conduct of the General conversation also differed greatly. Many students had learnt, or tried to learn, answers to a list of questions. For higher attaining students at the tier, this worked well, provided the teacher interspersed these with follow-up questions which allowed for greater spontaneity. Often, however, very similar questions were asked of all students and the more difficult ones were often not answered by students. This took up valuable time in the tests and led to disjointed conversations. Where

teachers' questions were sympathetic to the ability of students, things worked much better and they got higher marks as a result.

On average, students gained a similar number of marks for the General conversation as they did for the Role-play and Photo card combined. As far as the General conversation is concerned, this was an improvement on last year.

The required length of the General conversation is between three and five minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of one and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher says 'End of test'. There were a lot of General conversations which exceeded the maximum five minutes. Quite often the student asked a question after this time and so it had to be discounted.

A penalty of one mark for Communication is applied if the student does not ask an understandable question of the teacher. It is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, time may be up and it is therefore too late. In this part of the exam, a student can be credited with asking the question by saying *¿Y tú?* if it is asked appropriately. For example, when asked, *¿Adónde vas de vacaciones?*, the reply is *Voy a Francia. ¿Y tú?* However, if the teacher prompts a question by asking *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?*, merely to say *¿Y tú?* would not count as an appropriate question.

Advice to teachers

General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students should not have access to their mobile during the preparation time or during the exam, in accordance with examination regulations.
- Make sure that you read the *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document. It is essential that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the Instructions document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student:
GCSE Spanish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, candidate number ____, candidate name _____. Role-play number ____, Photo card letter ____, General conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Everything said by the teacher must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA, as will instances where it sounds as though something is being written down.
- Use Spanish throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her Role-play and Photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the General conversation in English.

- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible. It can be a good use of the Foreign Language Assistant's time, if you have one.

Role-play

- Keep to your script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in a task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the two-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesante* or *aburrido* and there are other ways to say *me gusta*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *divertido, impresionante, maravilloso, estupendo, antipático*; and verbs such as *me encanta, me interesa, lo encuentro ..., odio, me molesta*.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Spanish: *Ahora vamos a pasar al tema número uno*, etc.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the General conversation is five minutes. Everything after that will not be marked.

- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they don't do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you don't forget to do it later on.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the Role-play tasks and in response to the three questions on the Photo card.
- For the Photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the Role-play and Photo card and to all questions in the General conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words such as *¿cuándo?*, *¿cuántos?*, *¿dónde?*, *¿quién?*, *¿cómo?* and *¿qué?*
- In the Role-play and Photo card, there are no extra marks for using complex language - you just need to provide clear information. So, just keep to language that you are confident is correct.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Spanish. You can say *Repíte, por favor* or *¿Cómo?*, for example.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.