



GCSE
Spanish

8698/SH Paper 1 Speaking Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

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General comments

The overall performance in the examination was very good. There was a wide range of quality in the tests of different students, but the vast majority were entered at the appropriate tier. Students were very well prepared for the Role-play and for the Photo card and the mean mark was high for both elements. The quality of the General conversation varied considerably, but most students gave a good performance, encouraged sympathetically by their teacher.

Conduct of the tests by teachers was very good on the whole, but there were still many instances where teachers did not adhere to the guidelines and this sometimes resulted in a loss of marks for a student. This happened mainly in the General conversation, when the timing of one of the themes was shorter than the minimum two and a half minutes. In the Role-play, teachers must keep to the script in their role. When this did not happen, the response of the student for that task had to be discounted. In the Photo card, where a paraphrase of the question is allowed, sometimes the teachers changed the question in such a way that it was not a true paraphrase and, again, the student's response was discounted.

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.

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. For example, in Role-play 16, the second task on the Candidate's role was *Regalo para qué ocasión especial*. It was expected that, in the preparation period, the student would have prepared something along the lines of *Es para el cumpleaños de mi amiga*. The teacher's prompt was *Muy bien*, at which point it was expected that the student would say what they had

prepared. However, some teachers moved away from the script and asked a supplementary question, such as *¿Para qué ocasión especial es el regalo?* That meant that the student's response had to score 0. There was a similar prompt for a task in the 2019 exam and the Examiner's report stressed that this type of prompt would occur in future exam series. Nor is it acceptable to repeat part of a prompt. For example, in Role-play 11, task 4, the first question in the was *¿Cuántas horas de televisión ves al día?* If a student did not understand the question, it was fine for the teacher to repeat the full question. However, it was not acceptable for the teacher simply to repeat the key question word *¿Cuántas?* Had these types 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 there are two parts to a question in the teacher's script, it is advisable to ask the first question, wait for the answer, and then ask the second question. For example, the unpredictable task in Role-play 14 was: *¿Qué cosas reciclas en tu casa? ... ¿Quién recicla más en tu familia?* Some teachers asked both parts of such a task at the same time and, almost invariably, students requested a repetition. Some teachers asked both questions, to show the student that two questions were coming up, and then repeated the first one. Once the student had answered, they repeated the second one. This was perfectly acceptable and usually worked well.

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. They should be encouraged to use these notes during the test. Sometimes it seemed that they were not doing that or that they had not made notes.

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, 6 for Communication would usually result in a mark of 3 for Knowledge and use of language.

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 10

Task a

This was done very well and most students scored marks. Where they did not, it was usually because they failed to include a verb or *por favor*.

Task b

This was done very well.

Task c

This was done very well.

Task d

A number of students seemed not to understand the meaning of *instalaciones*, which caused problems.

Task e

Where students could use the preterite and/or imperfect tenses accurately, this task was done well and that was usually the case. If the present tense was used, one mark could still be achieved.

Role-play 11**Task a**

This was done very well.

Task b

This was done very well.

Task c

This caused more problems than most past tense tasks and some students described a programme in the present tense. Sometimes students seem afraid or embarrassed to use English names of things when they gave an answer in all parts of the test. However, that was fine here, provided some Spanish was also included in the answer. So, 2 marks would be given to answers such as: *Vi Coronation Street y fue divertido*.

Task d

Although a verb was not needed for 2 marks in this unprepared task, at least one of the questions was often not understood.

Task e

This was done well, the most common question being *¿Te gustan las películas?*

Role-play 12**Task a**

This was done well. However, occasionally a student gave two aspects that were clearly both positive or negative and just scored 1 mark.

Task b

This was done very well.

Task c

Students did well on the whole, although at times it appeared that *obligatorias* was not understood. However, the mark scheme allowed for any two subjects for 2 marks.

Task d

This was done quite well, although it was relatively common for students to use the present tense and so get 1 mark.

Task e

This was done well, where students tried to keep things simple by asking things like *¿Te gustan las vacaciones escolares?* or *¿Tienes (muchas) vacaciones escolares?*

Role-play 13

Task a

This was done very well.

Task b

This proved to be quite challenging, probably because of the word *sabático* which many appeared not to understand.

Task c

This was done very well.

Task d

A wide range of questions were asked in this task and it was done well.

Task e

This was done very well. Students tend to be able to use the immediate future confidently.

Role-play 14

Task a

Occasionally this may have been conceptually difficult for students, but many got two marks here with answers such as *Es importante para el mundo*.

Task b

Students could usually provide at least one detail here. Sometimes one of the details was unclear because of an attempt to say something quite complex.

Task c

This was done well on the whole. The most common successful answers usually mentioned two things that the student is going to recycle in the future.

Task d

The first question was answered quite well, but *¿Quién?* was sometimes not understood in the second one.

Task e

This was done well.

Role-play 15**Task a**

This was done very well, although sometimes *nombre* was confused with *número*.

Task b

Spelling of the student's name was often not perfect, but it was usually accurate enough to be understood. In the second question, *¿Cuántas?* was often not understood and sometimes the student thought it was the prompt for the next task.

Task c

Students usually seemed to have prepared a good answer for this task, but see the general comments on the role-plays (above).

Task d

This was done very well and any question which fitted the prompt was accepted, even if it was a strange one in context, for example: *¿Cuál es tu restaurante favorito?*

Task e

This was done very well.

Role-play 16**Task a**

Many students tried to over-complicate this task and their response was unclear. The intention was for them to say something like: *Quiero / me gustaría una chaqueta azul*.

Task b

Students usually seemed to have prepared a good answer for this task, but see the general comments on the role-plays (above).

Task c

This was often misunderstood and students quite often did not answer.

Task d

This was done well if the student understood *descuentos*, but a number appeared not to.

Task e

Where students could use the preterite and/or imperfect tenses accurately, this task was done well and that was usually the case. If the present tense was used, one mark could still be achieved.

Role-play 17**Task a**

This was done very well.

Task b

Where students could use the preterite and/or imperfect tenses accurately, this task was done well and that was usually the case. If the present tense was used, one mark could still be achieved.

Task c

This was done very well.

Task d

Where students kept their answers simple, this was done well. For the second question, some students tried to say, for example, that they use the Internet when they need to send a message and the response contained some lack of clarity. Quite often, *¿Cuándo?* was not understood.

Task e

This was done very well, although some students lost a mark because there was no mention of Peru in their question.

Role-play 18**Task a**

Very well done.

Task b

This was done well.

Task c

This was done well.

Task d

Where students could use the preterite and/or imperfect tenses accurately, this task was done well and that was usually the case. If the present tense was used, one mark could still be achieved.

Task e

This was done very well, although some students lost a mark because there was no mention of Mexico in their question.

Photo cards

Most teachers had once again 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. The marks achieved by students in this part of the test were generally very high.

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 third question on Photo card K was *¿Piensas que los amigos son más importantes que la familia?* If a teacher paraphrased by asking *En tu opinión, ¿los amigos son más importantes que la familia?*, this was fine because exactly the same meaning was maintained. However, *¿Prefieres tus amigos o tu familia?* was not allowed because it is not a paraphrase and the question is a much easier one for the student to understand. Extra words such as *en el futuro* or *actividades* cannot be added to the printed questions, nor can words be repeated within the question, for example in the fifth question on Photo card N: *¿Prefieres pasar las vacaciones en el campo o en la costa? ... ¿Campo o costa?*

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 K

Describe cómo eras tú cuando eras pequeño/pequeña.

Students generally found this difficult, either because they did not understand the question or because they found it difficult to form the imperfect tense. Where the preterite was used instead, it was accepted as giving clear information.

Photo card L

Háblame de una actividad interesante que hiciste en el pasado en tu instituto.

This tended to be done quite well. However, some students had trouble formulating verbs in the preterite tense, even though this was a question to which they could prepare an answer in the preparation period.

Photo card M

As at Foundation tier, this card proved to be the most challenging. The topics of global and social issues are the ones that cause the most difficulty for students.

Photo card O

¿Qué hobby no te gustaría hacer en el futuro? ... ¿Por qué?

As at Foundation tier, the cognate *hobby* was often not known. Teachers often repeated the question, changing *hobby* to *pasatiempo*, and students seemed more comfortable with that word.

Photo card Q

Háblame de los problemas que puede causar el uso excesivo de la tecnología.

This proved to be quite a challenging question, even though it was one to which students could prepare an answer.

General conversation

As in previous years, there was a wide variety in the nature of the conversations, where some had a very pre-learnt feel and others were much more spontaneous, helped very much by teachers asking follow-up questions after a student's extended response. For those students who had clearly learnt extended

answers to questions this had an effect on the spontaneity strand of the Spontaneity and fluency mark. It also often had a bearing on the mark given for Pronunciation and intonation because intonation was poor. In the worst cases, the pronunciation made the intended message incomprehensible and so the mark for Communication was also affected. On the other hand, students whose Spanish was quite inaccurate could still score highly for Pronunciation and intonation and for Spontaneity and fluency if their performance merited it.

Timing of the General conversation was often incorrect. The required length of the General conversation is between five and seven minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of two 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’.

The other time that a penalty of one mark for Communication is applied is if the student does not ask an understandable question of the teacher. Sometimes the question was asked by the student after the 7-minute maximum time for the General conversation had passed and it could not be credited. 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 student 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 three-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 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the General conversation is seven 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.