



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2021

Pearson Edexcel International A Level Spanish
Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response
(WSP03_01)

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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 many 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. The discussions should be about ideas not purely factual, narrative, or descriptive.

To reach the top mark band (5) 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 were many fine and very competent performances noted.

Only 64 candidates took the exam this series. Most of them were native or bilingual speakers.

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 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 Marking Guidance for Oral Examiners.

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, as per the Marking Guidance for Oral Examiners.

In spite of the above, it was pleasing to note that most examiners conducted the test 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

The majority of candidates chose a suitable issue for their debate which meant they could interact effectively with the teacher, 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. Weaker performing 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.

There were few 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 candidate on his/her topic.

In most cases candidates did not mention target language newspapers / magazines or written material which could be referenced. This meant that they could not access the top bands 4/5 for Reading and Research.

The discussion

Some 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 or evidence and develop their responses.

Sometimes, many unconnected topics were covered, and the examinations were more interviews than discussions which resulted in a Question and Answer session. This is not what is expected or required.

The follow up areas for this part of the examination can be chosen from the from the General Topic Area for AS, as well as, from the Additional General Topic Areas for A Level (these 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 or personal questions and thereby not giving the candidates any chance to develop their response appropriately for an A Level exam.

Suitability of Topics/ Issues

The most successful issues 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.

The most popular issues were abortion, the legalisation of drugs, veganism, and bull fighting.

Some other interesting issues presented were :

'En contra de la reválida' 'A favor de donar órganos' 'A favor del feminismo'

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

'En contra de los teléfonos móviles' 'En contra de echar desechos contaminates al mar'

Conduct of the examination

Many teacher 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 teacher examiners spoke too much and asked long and some 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 here 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 appropriate marking principles were applied, as per the Marking Guidance for Oral Examiners 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.
- 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 Marking Guidance for Oral Examiners for this unit.

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