

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE Spanish (4SP0)
Paper 02

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Examiner Report

This paper is designed to test reading comprehension and writing skills through seven tasks of varying levels of difficulty. Overall, this summer's cohort performed to a similar level to previous series. The least able candidates found the more straightforward tasks accessible, while the strongest candidates were able to shine, particularly in the writing tasks. Many candidates were able to command fluent, idiomatic and sophisticated Spanish that was at a level well in excess of that required by this exam.

Question 1

This question was about clothes. Candidates had to match pictures of items with a list of Spanish words. Most candidates were able to score at least 3 marks out of 5. The most difficult items appeared to be 'guantes' and 'calcetines'.

Question 2

This text was a letter to a friend about school and candidates had to find the correct word from a choice of words to complete sentences summarising the content. The majority of candidates scored full marks here. The most common error was in Q2e where the answer should have been 'clubs'.

Question 3

This was about food and drink. Candidates had to decide who said what, from a list of statements. Only the weakest candidates scored less than full marks here.

Question 4

This was a writing question related to the previous text on food and drink. Candidates were required to write about their favourite food and drink and to give reasons for these preferences. All candidates were able to express some opinions; many gave great detail and used beautiful Spanish to do so. The most frequent error seen was to have missed one element of the content: examiners were looking for an opinion on food and drink and reasons. Some candidates got very carried away writing about their favourite food (often using a range of tenses), but either omitted drinks or reasons. This limited the mark they were given for the content. The word for 'drinks' itself caused some difficulty as 'bebir', 'bebido' and even 'bebé' were seen.

Problems with 'gustar' were also noted, with 'me gusta como' cropping up frequently. One unexpected mistake seen often was 'salud' used in place of 'ensalada'. Most candidates scored at least 7 out of 10.

Question 5

This was a longer passage about visiting Peru and candidates had to identify the topic of each paragraph. A mark of 3 out of 5 was common.

Question 6

This is the most challenging reading question as the questions are in Spanish and candidates have to answer in Spanish. It is possible to 'lift' sections of the text in order to answer each question, but as there are an additional 5 marks available for the quality of the language used in the answers, candidates are encouraged to use their own words.

This year's topic was mobile phones in school. The most able candidates were able to answer the questions and also to use correct and varied language in their responses. Weaker candidates frequently scored only 1 or 2 marks for language as they had used predominantly the words from the text, but still scored for the comprehension. An average of around 7 marks out of 15 was scored here.

Questions 6 a, di and g were mostly answered correctly, but the language was only infrequently changed from 'los colegios', 'los exámenes' and 'el papel y los lápices'. In Q6e many candidates were awarded a mark for the idea that exam questions will have to be changed, even though they had lifted rather awkwardly from the text, e.g. 'cambiar será el tipo de preguntas que se les haga'.

Question 7

This is a writing question where candidates are given a choice of 3 tasks and a series of bullet points to address for each one. The bullet points offer the opportunity to use a range of tenses. This year the tasks were a letter to friend about a holiday, a blog entry about a party and a magazine article about work experience.

The overwhelming majority of candidates elected to write about a holiday. In fact many essays contained the same expressions and this topic had obviously been prepared very thoroughly in class. A pleasing number of candidates were able to move fluently through a range of tenses and included a variety of connectives and adjectives to produce a piece of writing that was a pleasure to read.

Examiners were amused to read accounts of holidays in Madrid where favourite pastimes were a trip to the beach. Such geographical shortcomings were in no way penalised.

Problems arose with the use of 'gustar' and 'encantar' (as always) and sometimes 'fui' and 'fue' were mixed up. The future tense created more difficulties than the preterite, especially with irregular verbs like 'poder'. Alternatives to the future, like 'voy a', 'tengo la intención de' and 'espero' were used frequently and appropriately.

In all three Q7 options, candidates usually covered all of the bullet points, although in Q7c (about work experience), some candidates did not fully grasp the scenario and wrote in the present tense about their normal daily routine. Even in essays where the candidates did write about work experience, the imperfect tense was not often used to describe what they did every day.

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