



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SPANISH
GCE
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2023

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' reports offer valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. They are written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and detail how candidates have performed.

This report offers an overall summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It goes on to look in detail at each question/section of each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.ⁱ

The information found in this report can provide invaluable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive annual programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 6 months after the examination.	www.wjecservices.co.uk or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the overall subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	www.wjecservices.co.uk
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	www.wjecservices.co.uk or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with invaluable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Subject Officer's Executive Summary

- This year was the second year in which the Unit 1 Speaking test was administered by teachers and the first in which teachers also administered the Unit 3 Speaking test. Teachers in Wales have risen to the challenge, and many conducted very successful assessments, enabling candidates to perform well.
- There were some excellent performances from candidates in the examination. In the speaking it is important that guidelines are followed so that candidates are not disadvantaged. Candidates are advised to read questions carefully, to be concise and to check grammar and spelling carefully.
- Teacher-examiners should adhere strictly to timings for the speaking assessment to avoid disadvantaging candidates. Issues discussed must be pertinent to the Spanish-speaking world to avoid irrelevance. Interaction between the candidate and the teacher-examiner should be genuinely spontaneous to access the higher mark bands. Candidates continue to find translation and essay skills the most challenging and they are reminded to make it clear to the examiner which essay question is being answered. Attention should be paid to tenses when translating to avoid losing marks and the meaning of vocabulary carefully considered. Answers to comprehension benefit from being concise to avoid irrelevance. Essays should contain well organised ideas in a structured response, which answer the question as set.

Areas for improvement / Guidance	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Continued improvement of linguistic skills	Past papers Mark schemes OER (Online Exam Review) CPD materials Exam walkthroughs	Previous candidate responses/mark scheme
Preparation for Speaking Instructions for Teacher-examiners Unit 1 Instructions for Teacher-examiners Unit 3	Examiner's report OER (Online Exam Review) CPD materials	Exemplar Guidance for teacher-examiners
WJEC GCE Spanish		Subject page
Spanish resource Guide		Language resources
Guidance for Teaching		Teacher Guide
Preparing Learners for the IRP Unit 3		Advice for teachers

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UNIT 1 SPEAKING

Overview of the Unit

In this Unit, candidates are required complete two tasks based on two stimulus cards.

In Task 1, the candidate will select a card from Set A. These cards will contain two opposing standpoints of an argument. The candidate will choose one of the standpoints and defend it against the examiner. This task allows the candidate to use the language of argument and debate.

In Task 2, the candidate will choose a card from Set B; this card will contain a short text and three questions. The candidate will have fifteen minutes to prepare both cards before the examination begins. Set A cards are based on the theme *Understanding the Spanish-speaking world* and the cards in Set B are based on the theme of *Being a young person in Spanish-speaking society*.

Candidates are being assessed on AO1, AO3 and AO4 in Task 1 and on all the Assessment Objectives in Task 2.

This year was the second year in which the tests in Unit 1 were administered by teachers. The Board is grateful for teachers' professional approach to this task.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Timing is important in these tests and should be observed carefully. Task 1 should last for between 5-6 minutes and Task 2 for between 7-9 minutes. Any speaking evidence which is produced beyond these timings will not be marked and failure to produce enough evidence will inevitably lead to the candidate being unable to access the full mark range. Candidates are allowed to complete the tasks in any order so the teacher-examiner must be sure to observe the timings carefully.

In Task 1, many candidates coped well with defending their argument but they should be aware of the need to bring into the discussion material which will show their knowledge and understanding of Spain or Spanish-speaking countries. They should be able to use this material as evidence to support their ideas and points of view. It is irrelevant to discuss issues that are not pertinent to Spain or Spanish-speaking countries and it is the teacher-examiner's responsibility to focus their questions solely on the Spanish-speaking world. However, it is not enough for a candidate to produce a list of, for example, Spanish dishes or festivals; these must be used as evidence to back up a point that the candidate is making. It is not appropriate for the teacher-examiner to use personal questions, such as *¿Cuál es tu comida favorita?* or *¿Has probado los churros?*; this type of question is not of the correct level for AS.

In Task 2, candidates need to be aware that this part of the test will begin with the three printed questions on the stimulus card and that they should use the information in the text to help them answer. Teacher-examiners should ask the three questions consecutively and no extra questions should be asked until the three printed questions have been answered. This year, there were examples of teacher-examiners asking extra questions between the compulsory questions. Similarly, the teacher-examiner may repeat but must not rephrase the questions.

To score highly on the AO2 marks, the candidate is required to show that they can “respond in speech to written language”; they must therefore use the information in the text and reply giving the appropriate information. It is not enough to read out the text from the card as this does not show true understanding; the candidate should use different vocabulary to enable them to show that they have understood the content. Too often this year, the candidate either read the text from the card or simply ignored the information on the card and gave their own answer. This was especially true of card B1 where the first question, *¿En qué consiste lo que se conoce como la familia moderna?* often elicited a generalised response about *familias monoparentales* or a move away from *familias tradicionales*, whereas the text refers specifically to *parejas del mismo sexo* establishing *una familia moderna*.

In Card B2, many candidates read the first sentence in response to Question 1; to show comprehension, the candidate needed to make some adjustments in their use of vocabulary and give an answer such as, *Según el texto, la gente joven empieza a beber alcohol cuando tiene entre 12 o 13 años*.

It is not appropriate for the teacher-examiner to read the text to the candidate, as happened in one set of tests this year, as the candidate is responding to written language in this part of the test.

In the discussion that follows, it is again important to centre the conversation on Spain; any generic discussions about family, education, health or other topics will bring down the candidate’s AO4 mark and it is the teacher-examiner’s responsibility to guide the candidate back to discussing the topic within the context of Spanish culture. Teacher-examiners should also be aware of the need to allow the candidate time to formulate their ideas, especially with candidates who are especially nervous or weak; too often this year, there were examples of teacher-examiners finishing the candidate’s sentences in order to move the discussion forward.

This year, many candidates were able to offer accurate language and showed a good knowledge of appropriate lexis and structures. Better candidates produced pronunciation and intonation that was convincing. Some candidates still struggle with basic errors, such as incorrect genders, missing adjectival agreement and incorrect subject-verb accord which can have the effect of confusing the message that the candidate is trying to convey. Candidates should ensure that they have a range of appropriate vocabulary that will allow them to discuss the AS topic areas with confidence. Native (or near-native) speakers, although they often score well in AO1 and AO3, frequently lose marks on AO2 and AO4 because they do not show the level of knowledge and understanding needed to score high marks or they do not refer to the text when responding.

The role of the teacher-examiner

Most teachers in Wales are conducting very successful tests and the WJEC is very grateful for their efforts.

However, occasionally the guidelines are not being followed carefully enough and this can cause the candidate to be disadvantaged. It is the teacher-examiner's technique that allows the candidate to produce the best possible performance. Teacher-examiners should remember that their role is one of a facilitator and they should not be tempted to talk for too long. To allow the candidate to access the highest bands for AO1, the interaction between the two speakers must be genuinely spontaneous. Where candidates are attempting to offer long sections of pre-learned speech, the teacher-examiner should gently interrupt and move the conversation on.

Teacher-examiners should use a timer and keep carefully to the timings set out by the Board. They should also steer the candidate away from generic discussions which are not related to the Spanish-speaking world. At the end of the test, teacher-examiners should not comment on the candidate's performance.

Administration

Centres are reminded of the importance of clearly recorded tests. It should be possible for the examiner to hear both the teacher-examiner and the candidate clearly and it is important that sound tests are carried out before the examination begins. This year, there were unfortunately some tests where the marker struggled to hear the candidate; examiners can only mark the language that they hear and so it is crucial, to give the candidate the best chance of a fair mark, that the tests are audible. In addition, centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to choose a venue which is quiet throughout the examining period and will not be disturbed.

Tests should be uploaded in .mp3 format to Surpass within 48 hours of the assessment.

Summary of key points

- Discussions between the candidate and the teacher-examiner should be genuinely spontaneous.
- In Task 1, the candidate should use the language of argument and debate.
- In both Tasks 1 and Tasks 2, candidates should show their knowledge and understanding of Spanish (or Hispanic) culture.
- In Task 2, the candidate must use the text to answer the first three questions (but should not read from the card).
- Timings must be accurate.
- Recordings should be of good quality and should be uploaded to Surpass by the deadline.

Conclusion

This Unit requires candidates to show that they have understanding of the Spanish-speaking world within the themes covered at AS and that they have a command of language which goes beyond GCSE level.

This year, many candidates were able to undertake the two tasks very successfully and it was a pleasure to hear the progress in their command of Spanish a year on from their GCSE examination.

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UNIT 2 Listening, Reading, Translation and Critical Response in Writing

Overview of the Unit

In this unit, the skills of listening, reading and translation are assessed (AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4). There was a reasonably wide range of overall marks here. The majority of Candidates did fairly well on the comprehension questions, although question 3 proved challenging to even some of the stronger candidates. As in the 2022 exam, the translation and essay, for the most part, continue to be the sections where there is the greatest disparity in marks between stronger and weaker candidates. In spite of the disruption and difficulties of the past few years, there were still some excellent performances from candidates. Both teachers and candidates are to be congratulated on their continued hard work and commitment to the course.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A – Listening

- Q.1 This was well done on the whole, the vast majority of candidates already having good background knowledge of *las redes sociales*.
- Q.2 This question proved more problematic as in a few cases Balvin was presumed to be a Colombian city, rather than a musician. However, many candidates had a background knowledge of the subject matter, having watched *Narcos* on Netflix and being familiar with reggaeton music.

In this question, the candidates must correct the statements which are false. If they fail to do so, a mark will not be awarded. Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates failed to do this. Whilst “lifting” whole sentences from the recording is not permitted, candidates are reminded that only minimal language manipulation is required in the correction. For example in 2 (g) the correction for *Segun J. Balvin el narcotráfico no afectó a muchos colombianos* could be *el narcotráfico afectó a la mayoría de colombianos*.

Grammatical errors are not penalised in the listening section as long as the answer is intelligible to a “sympathetic native speaker”. Common errors in this section included: the failure to understand the word *ambiguo* in 2(a) in the statement.

Candidates who gave succinct, clear corrections were more likely to be given a mark than those who gave over complex replies.

Section B - Reading Comprehension

- Q.3 Question 3 produced a varied response from the candidates, and there were some low marks on this question. It is worth mentioning again that a response is not necessarily correct if it makes grammatical sense, though this is one of the criteria. For example, in question 3 (b) options 1, 2, 7 and 8 all make sense grammatically, but only 7 reflects the information given in the passage.
- Q.4 This was well answered on the whole. Candidates are reminded to pay attention to the title, which frequently gives a resumé of the passage itself. Here the title makes it clear that *nahuatl* is *la lengua de los Aztecas*. and that Milpa Alta is the community in which it is spoken.

Section C Translation

- Q.5 There was a very wide variety of marks here, ranging from two or three on occasions to a full mark of 20. In question 5, the translation also forms the *segunda parte* of question 4, so it is worth reading over this question again as the subject matter is the same.

Some candidates experienced problems translating *nahuatl*, which requires no translation into English or Welsh, although *the nahuatl* was seen, even though it reads very awkwardly in English.

As was the case in previous exams, candidates did not always accurately reflect the tense of the verbs in the English/Welsh translation (e.g *dijo* was translated as a present tense and not the simple past and *está creciendo* was not translated as a present continuous).

Other problems were *siento que* sometimes translated as *I'm sorry* and the phrase *gente de fuera* which was translated at times as *the outside people* or the *Fuera people*. It must be emphasised that candidates are being asked to accurately convey the meaning of the Spanish passage in English/Welsh. This does not necessarily mean a word for word translation, translating from the target language into English or Welsh, there is more flexibility in the translation of vocabulary, phrases and with word order. Candidates are strongly urged to read over their completed translations. The finished translation must read as normal English/Welsh and not as a stilted version of the original Spanish.

Section D Critical response in writing.

- Q.6 As in previous years, there was a very wide range of marks awarded in this section.

It was encouraging to see that many candidates made a plan before writing.

However, some of the weaker essays were well over the word count, contained a lot of irrelevant material and made little or no reference to the title.

Such candidates often used the *puntos de partida* to recount the whole storyline of the film. These essays were very long, rambling and often riddled with very basic grammatical errors, and the title of the essay was scarcely referred to.

Candidates are urged to clearly state which of the essay options (a or b) they have chosen, as it is not always evident from the content.

With *Maria, llena eres de gracia*, 1(b) was a more popular choice. There were some very interesting essays with sound analysis of Maria's relationship with her sister, and how it affected the decisions she made. This was also the case with the stronger candidates in 1(a), who put a good case for the impact that Lucy had on Maria's life, in spite of having known her for only a short time. It is important to note that the majority of the better essays did not exceed the recommended word count and made relevant and often original comments.

Common errors are often the same as mentioned in previous reports, namely *ser* and *estar*, radical changing verbs, genders of common nouns such as *el amistad*, *la tema*, *el razón*. Invented words or phrases such as *providiar*, *protectiva*, *porque de*.

Subject pronouns, object pronouns and possessive adjectives are also a source of problems and used in an interchangeable way such as *Maria quiere una vida segura para su y su hijo*.

In the case of *Volver*, 2 (a) There were some very good essays with sound analysis of both Raimunda's and other families in the film. There were a few cases in which candidates referred to statistics and facts in modern day Spain on families and single mothers. AO4 here refers here to the response to the question, the arguments presented and knowledge of the film.

In 2(b) with some candidates the essay lapsed into storytelling, and again there were numerous AO4 references to domestic violence in Spain as a whole amongst other topics. Some of these essays were triple the recommended word count and therefore grammatical errors multiplied. If a response is, with reference to AO4 "descriptive rather than critical" then a candidate will not be placed in a higher band for this assessment objective. The stronger essays displayed a good or very good knowledge of the film and their arguments were developed and justified, and conclusions drawn with appropriate evidence from the source material (AO4 marking grid).

Common errors included, as always, incorrect conjugation of *morir*, failure to distinguish between that and the noun *la muerte* and confusion between *el carácter* and *el personaje*.

There were fewer candidates who chose to write about *El Bola* and *Diarios de Motocicleta* and 3(a) and 4(b) were the most popular choices. However, there were some essays of a very high standard which traced the relationship between Pablo and his father and the development in Ernesto's character in a logical, analytical way.

Summary of key points

Reading and Listening sections:

- Read the question carefully. Marks are often lost when the candidates rush through or misinterpret a question.
- Keep answers concise-complete sentences are not always required. The candidates may be penalised if they include too much irrelevant information.

Translation

- Look at the translation as a whole and in context.
- The translation is the *segunda parte* of question 4, reread the first part which can be a help in the translation and meaning of certain words or phrases.
- Check that the tenses used in the English/Welsh translation reflect those used in Spanish.
- Make sure the translation into English/Welsh reads naturally. Don't be afraid to "tweak" the translation if it sounds stilted.

Essay

- Read the title carefully.
- Make a plan.
- Check carefully for grammatical errors and misspellings.
- Try to keep within the recommended word limit-more is not necessarily better.

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UNIT 3 SPEAKING

Overview of the Unit

In this Unit, candidates are required to conduct research in Spanish on a topic related to the Spanish-speaking world, give a two-minute presentation to introduce their ideas on the topic and then to offer explanations and points of view during the ensuing discussion which lasts between 9-10 minutes. This Series was the first in which teacher-examiners conducted the tests; the Board recognises that conducting the tests has added to the workload of the teachers concerned and is grateful for their professional approach.

This year, there was once again a wide choice of topics, often reflecting the candidates' own personal interests. Candidates are advised to choose a topic with a specific focus; this allows them to research in depth and to offer more analysis and evaluation. A title in the form of a question allows the candidate to respond by answering the question, which can be a successful technique. Some candidates this year offered a factual or descriptive account but were less successful at giving analysis or evaluation. In the discussion, it is the responsibility of the teacher-examiner to guide the candidate into the area of evaluation to allow the candidate to reach their individual ceiling. It is not appropriate for the teacher-examiner to ask personal, GCSE-style questions at this level as this will inevitably limit the candidate's AO4 marks.

Some candidates showed themselves to be very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their topic area and about Spanish culture. Interesting topics this year included *el feminicidio en Perú*, *la Movida Madrileña*, *el Camino de Santiago*, *los prejuicios de la sociedad contra las actrices latinoamericanas en la televisión*, *la polémica situación entre Ceuta y Melilla* and *las Fallas, ¿una declaración política o una fiesta cultural?*

Topics that are too wide or without a specific focus are generally not a successful choice. The candidate should focus on a specific element or elements of an issue and research in depth. Most Centres seem to be giving sound advice on maintaining a narrow focus for the topic, rather than aiming too widely, and this encourages the candidate to delve into the topic in more detail. For example, a candidate choosing a topic such as *La Guerra Civil Española* would be facing an almost impossible task and the title would invite factual information rather than analysis. However, a title with a narrower focus and in question form, such as *¿Qué importancia tuvo la Batalla del Ebro durante la Guerra Civil Española?* would lead the candidate towards evaluation and the candidate would focus on answering the question in the presentation and subsequent discussion. If in doubt, Centres are welcome to contact WJEC to ask for advice.

Similarly, candidates should be aware that a superficial or generalised approach is not appropriate here; some topics, such as Pablo Escobar, based only on watching the Netflix series *Narcos*, or topics based around singers such as *Bad Bunny* or *Rosalía* alone, do not allow for an evaluative approach and are therefore unlikely to score high marks for AO4.

Many candidates showed an ability to manipulate the language accurately, using complex structures and a wide range of appropriate and topic-specific vocabulary, which was very pleasing. Some candidates struggled with the accuracy of their language, making basic errors of gender, adjectival agreement and subject-verb accord. However, this Unit is not just about producing a high level of language; too often, native (or near-native) speakers score well in AO1 and AO3 but much less well in AO2 and AO4. Centres should ensure that all candidates have done the level of research necessary to allow them to have an informed discussion.

Centres are reminded that, to score high marks for AO2, the candidate must respond in spoken Spanish to written material. Candidates should be using Spanish sources and they should refer specifically to their research in both the presentation and the discussion. This year, it was a concern to see that some candidates had used only material in English or Welsh as a basis for their research and, as a result, they were unable to score marks beyond the lowest mark bands. It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that candidates understand the requirements of the IRP before they are left to work independently. They should be taught the necessary skills that allow them to research effectively in the target language and to record their sources accurately. It is not enough for a candidate to record a vague mention of a publication on their IRP form, e.g., <https://elpais.com>; the candidate should record the exact article with an interactive link if using online material. If using printed material, the candidate should record the name of the publication, the edition, the author and the page number. Centres are also reminded that the main sources must be written as the candidate is responding in speech to the written word. Candidates are welcome to add video material to their sources list but this must be in addition to their written sources, not instead.

Comments on individual questions/sections

In the presentation, the candidate should aim to lay out the topic and their personal response in such a way that several issues arise; the examiner can then pick up on these issues in the discussion. It is essential that the candidate should mention their research here; they do not have to name specific sources (which should be clear from the IRP form) but they should be mentioning articles, websites or reports that they have read, using comments like, "*Según un artículo en El País...*" or "*Leí en un sitio web mexicano...*" or "*En un informe en un sitio web, se dice que...*". Inevitably, there is often an element of pre-learning in the presentation; however, candidates should be encouraged not to speak too quickly to allow their message to be clearly conveyed. Often, the speed of the delivery of the presentation makes it difficult for the marker to understand the meaning of what the candidate is saying.

In the discussion, the candidate should attempt to develop their ideas in response to the examiner's questions and to move from the factual to adopt a more analytical approach, offering points of view and justifications. It was clear from many of the discussions this year that the candidates had invested time and effort into their research; the majority of candidates were knowledgeable about their chosen topic and were very well-informed. Some candidates also showed the ability to use their research to evidence their points of view and to back up their arguments, offering facts, figures and statistics. To score high marks, candidates must go beyond the factual; they must be prepared to offer considered analysis and evaluation and this often depends on the questions asked by the teacher-examiner. In addition, the teacher-examiner should draw the candidates towards a discussion about their research in order to allow them to mention the types of sources they have used, if they have not done so independently.

Candidates also need to be able to cope with an unseen or unexpected question; they need to develop strategies that allow them to gain a few seconds “thinking time” before launching into their answer. It was pleasing to see that some candidates felt able to do this by using phrases such as “*Déjame pensar un momento*” or “*¡Vaya pregunta!*”. However, it is useful to have a range of phrases available to avoid repetition of the same language.

The role of the Centre

Although teachers are not permitted to help candidates with their Independent Research Project once work on the project has begun, it is the Centre’s responsibility to ensure that candidates have been taught the skills that they will need to allow them to research widely in the target language and also that they have chosen a suitable topic. Centres are allowed to discuss possible topics with candidates and every topic must be rooted in the culture of Spain or the Spanish-speaking world.

The role of the teacher-examiner

Teachers in Wales rose to the challenge this year and many conducted very successful tests in which candidates were able to develop their ideas and show genuine spontaneity in their responses.

The teacher-examiner’s technique is important in allowing the candidate to produce the best possible performance. Teacher-examiners should remember that their role is one of a facilitator; they must genuinely interact with the candidate but not be tempted to share their own opinions and ideas. It is also important for the teacher-examiner to remain silent while the candidate is giving the presentation; many teacher-examiners made comments in an attempt to encourage the candidate but this should be done by smiling and nodding rather than by speaking. To allow the candidate to access the highest bands for AO1 in the discussion, the interaction between the two speakers must be genuinely spontaneous and must build like a real conversation with each speaker picking up on what the other is saying. Candidates who are trying to offer long sections of pre-learned speech should be discouraged; the teacher-examiner should interrupt and ask the candidate to clarify, exemplify or explain their point further.

Teacher-examiners should use a timer and keep carefully to the timings set out by the Board. The Presentation should last for two minutes and the discussion for a further 9 to 10 minutes. Any speech beyond these timings will not be considered for marking. At the end of the test, teacher-examiners should not comment on the candidate’s performance.

Administration

Centres are reminded of the importance of clearly recorded tests. It should be possible for the examiner to hear both the teacher-examiner and the candidate clearly and it is important that sound tests are carried out before the examination begins. This year, there were unfortunately some tests where the marker struggled to hear the candidate; examiners can only mark the language that they hear and so it is crucial, to give the candidate the best chance of a fair mark, that the tests are audible. In addition, centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to choose a venue which is quiet throughout the examining period and will not be disturbed. Tests should be uploaded in .mp3 format to Surpass together with a copy of the IRP form for each candidate within 48 hours of the assessment. It should not be necessary for the Board to chase missing forms or recordings after the deadline, as was the case this year.

Summary of key points

- Discussions between the candidate and the teacher-examiner must be genuinely spontaneous.
- Candidates must use written sources in Spanish.
- Reference should be made to the sources and research in both the presentation and discussion.
- Candidates should aim to move beyond the factual and adopt an evaluative approach.
- Timings must be accurate.
- Recordings should be of good quality and should be uploaded to Surpass, together with the IRP forms, by the deadline.

Conclusion

This Unit allows candidates the freedom to explore a topic linked to the Hispanic world which is not covered by the Specification. It was clear that candidates had done a lot of research into their chosen topic and this is an excellent exercise in developing study skills in preparation for further education.

Part of the purpose of the IRP is to give candidates the skills to research effectively in the target language and to use the information from their target language sources as a basis for evidence to back up their arguments. Centres where candidates have researched in English or Welsh only have not advised their candidates appropriately and this should be taken into consideration when preparing future cohorts.

This year, there were many well-informed discussions to which it was a pleasure to listen; many candidates were keen to talk about something which they had chosen, in which they had a genuine interest and about which they were very knowledgeable.

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UNIT 4 LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION

Overview of the Unit

In this unit, the skills of listening, reading and translation are assessed (AO1, AO2 and AO3). There was, a wide range of marks, with an impressive number of candidates scoring over 80%. The strongest candidates did well on the open-ended questions in the reading comprehension section. Weaker candidates struggled in the translation and the open-ended reading comprehension section in particular. The extra time allotted to the exam, as last year, had a positive impact in that fewer candidates failed to finish. There are again indications, however, that with the weaker candidates the last 2 questions in particular were rushed in some cases. There was a narrower range of marks this year, with fewer candidates than last year scoring in the 20s and 30s. There were also fewer candidates in the top range for the translation, and this again has proved the most challenging task for many of them.

Candidates and teachers are to be thanked and congratulated for all the hard work they have put in over the last very challenging few years which has been evident in the standard of this year's exams.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A – Listening

- Q.1 This was well done on the whole, with stronger candidates sometimes scoring full marks.
- Q.2 Question 2 was reasonably well done and stronger candidates also scored very highly. Difficulties included numbers and months (targeted in sub questions 11,12, and 15,18).
- Q.3 Question 3 proved problematic for numerous candidates because of the open-ended nature of the questions. It should be noted that complete sentences are not always required; for example, in (b) *fue fusilada* or *fusilada* alone is acceptable as is *nunca* in question (g). Candidates are reminded that *no* or *sí* alone are **not** acceptable responses, something else must be added as in (g) *no, nunca*.

The majority of candidates attempted question 3, which had often been abandoned when they were allocated less time before 2022.

Section B – Reading

- Q.4 Although there was a variation of marks, most candidates managed to pick up a reasonable score here. As with last year's exam, the division of the passage into 3 parts, with separate lists of vocabulary to choose from proved to be a more accessible format. Candidates should read over their answers after filling in the gaps, not only to ensure that it makes sense grammatically but also in the context in which it is set (in this case just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.)
- Q.5 In Section (a) primera parte, the strong candidates often achieved full marks. Weaker candidates seemed to hazard a guess at any possible answer. Again, the information given in the text must be referred to when answering the questions. In Section 5(b) segunda parte a small number of candidates failed to read or misunderstood the instructions and tried to supply an ending to the phrase or word (as in Question 5, primera parte) rather than looking for a word or words in the passage which conveyed a similar meaning such as (a) *originario de* being matched up with *nacido en* in the passage.
- Q.6 In Question 6, an open-ended comprehension, there was a very large range of marks. The answers of a number of candidates seemed rushed and there were those who performed reasonably well in other sections but scored low marks here. Some questions were not even attempted, indicating that in spite of the extra 15 minutes added, time is still an issue for some candidates.

In question 6 (a) there were candidates who gave long over complicated answers, lifting "chunks" of text from the passage. If candidates give too much irrelevant information, it will adversely affect the mark awarded for their answer. Some of the best answers were concise ones. Grammatical errors are not penalised here - if the response is intelligible to a "sympathetic native speaker", the mark is awarded. In question 6(c), the key words are *en tu opinión* and the candidates do not have to give an answer based on the text, but a more generic one if they choose to do so.

Section C translation

- Q.7 There was a big range of marks here with weaker candidates sometimes scoring below 5 out of 20. Common errors included the failure to manipulate the preterite tense, especially with irregular or radical changing verbs, for example *hicieron*, *empezaron*. Gender errors with commonly known nouns such as *estación*, *situación*, *día* were observed *and* the use of the infinitive in Spanish where a gerund would be used in English. *-migrando no es delito* occurred numerous times. In other cases, relatively simple grammatical constructions such as *hace + time = ago.*, as in the opening sentence, *hace un año*, were not known. Other problems included confusion between *miles* and *millones*, *eso*, *ese* and *esa*. On occasions, relatively basic vocabulary such as *la estación de autobuses*, *irse*, *largarse*, *un crimen / un delito*, *andar / caminar*, *parar* were not known.

In spite of these problems, there were, however, some very good answers, displaying a very high standard of grammatical knowledge and idiom. Several candidates scored top marks and the translation sounded fluent and natural. These candidates also got around any problems of vocabulary by paraphrasing (for example using *un mensaje en Facebook* or *migrar no es ilegal* where the word *delito* or *crimen* was not known). They were also less wary of rephrasing to achieve a better flowing translation.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to pay attention to verb tenses in the translation question. marks were often lost by failing to recognise the tense of the verb used.
- Look carefully at the vocabulary in the translation. Some words can be translated by another word or a phrase with a similar meaning.
- In comprehension questions, keep answers concise as complete sentences are not always required. Candidates may be penalised if they include too much irrelevant information.

SPANISH

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 5 CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

Overview of the Unit

General Comments

The most popular choices of text were *Como agua para chocolate* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba* but all texts were represented and all questions were answered.

The higher scoring candidates with marks in the top two boxes of the marking scheme produced answers that were typified by the following characteristics, which are outlined in order to assist teachers in their own approaches to formative and summative assessment:

AO3 – Quality of the language	AO4 – The content of the answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a wide range of appropriately used vocabulary, both to talk about the content of the work studied and to analyse it effectively• a wide and varied range structures, particularly featuring the effective use of subordinating conjunctions• fully coherent and fluent language• language where errors do not distract the reader, although absolute perfection is not required for a high mark• accurate verbs and agreements• language where all of the basics are solid and errors only occur in the most ambitious structures• very rare interference from their first language <p>NB – quotations are disregarded for the assessment of AO3 because they are the words of the author of the work, not language produced by the candidate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• responses that are consistently focussed on answering the question asked and do not digress• awareness of ‘artistic purpose’ in that the response identifies the writer’s intentions and the effect of their writing on the reader or audience• a sense of standing back from the work and assessing it as art rather than retelling the story by explaining what the author is doing when he makes certain characters do what they do• analytical comment that is underpinned by an understanding of the social, artistic and political context of the work• an ability to understand the work through the eyes of Hispanic society both at the time it was written and also now• point – evidence – evaluation structuring so that points are made that answer the question, evidence is given in the form of well-chosen quotations or close reference to the text and there is evaluation of the relevance and importance of the point in the work as a whole and in answer to the question.

The middle scoring candidates with marks in the third and fourth boxes in the marking scheme produced answers that were typified by the following characteristics, which are outlined in order to assist teachers in their own approaches to formative and summative assessment:

AO3 – Quality of the language	AO4 – The content of the answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a fair range of vocabulary but with a tendency towards the language of GCSE and language that was stronger when they were narrating what happened in the work than when analysing it. • a straightforward range structures, often in simple structures but where there is some loss of linguistic control in more extended sentences, such as the use of unconjugated verbs or basic errors of gender and agreement • generally fluent language that is mostly comprehensible but with some effort needed from the reader at times and with some noticeable influence of their first language • language where errors would occasionally distract a reader whose first language is Spanish, for example the use of apostrophe-s for those whose first language is English or confusion between “más” and “muy” where their first language is Welsh. • verbs and agreements that are insecure, especially in tenses such as the pluperfect or the confusion of the simple past (preterite) with the past participle • language where some of the basics are inconsistent but overall the essay is generally comprehensible <p>NB – quotations are disregarded for the assessment of AO3 because they are the words of the author of the work, not language produced by the candidate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses that are not consistently focussed on answering the question asked and digress • not answering the question asked and relying on possibly memorised ideas and information • ‘catch-all’ opening paragraphs that are produced from memory and give biographical information about the writer or summarise the plot • only a fair understanding of the purpose and intentions of the writer and a tendency to retell elements of the story without really commenting on their relevance within the work as a whole • limited social, political or artistic contextualisation, such as talking about the events of the work as if they were happening now and seeing them with a 21st century social view, rather than understanding the context and concerns of the time • the use of personal comment and speculation (often in the first person singular) and allied to this an over-focus on the events of the story and relatively little comment on the relevance of them • responses that contain a lot of pertinent information but where the overall coherence is not maintained, so that examples are sometimes given that do not exemplify the points made or the overall structure lacks organisation

It is not necessary to consider the characteristics of the lowest scoring candidates, save to say that the responses were often very unclear both in terms of language and content. Most of the candidates fell into the two broad categories above.

Comments on individual questions/sections

El otro árbol de Guernica

- Q.1 (a) Question 1(a) asked candidates to analyse the importance of 'roots' in the novel. Candidates who answered well were able to discuss the roots of the tree itself and connect this a metaphor for the social roots of the children and hence to the title of the novel. They were also able to evaluate the importance and the dilemmas surrounding the heritage of the children and speak about the challenges of life in Belgium, both personally and socially. They also showed very good understanding of the attitudes of Santi and the other characters to the wider issue of what belonging means and the choices needed. This was the more popular choice of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate a critical appreciation of the concepts and issues covered in the work.
- (b) Question 1(b) asked candidates to analyse the process of maturity that the Spanish children pass through. Candidates who answered well made effective use of the metaphor of the journey to another country and connected this with the idea of growing up and moving on. They spoke about the often-imperfect leadership of Santi and sometimes criticised his dogged determination to hold onto the past at all costs and his lack of self-awareness, almost as if in some ways the person who most needs to mature is Santi himself. They also focussed their response on the way the group supported each other and grew together. This was the less popular choice of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, also targeted the requirement to demonstrate a critical appreciation of the concepts and issues covered in the work.

Como Agua para chocolate

- Q.2 (a) Question 2(a) asked candidates to analyse the significance of the title of the novel within the context of the work. Candidates who answered well knew the meaning of the title and understood its portentous nature. They organised their essays around various ways in which the title and the idea of 'reaching boiling point' could be seen by the reader. They wrote about how the title connected to the idea of food and the recipes at the start of each chapter, how it reflected the 'pressure-cooker' environment within the ranch-house, how Tita was impacted and responded to the pressures within her life and the nature of strength and weakness is examined by Esquivel through her presentation of the characters in the novel. This was an almost equally popular choice out of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate understanding of the form and the technique of presentation of the work.

- (b) Question 2(b) asked candidates to evaluate how far Mamá Elena's authoritarian nature was the root of the disasters in the novel. Candidates who answered well were able to produce nuanced and intelligent responses, saying that she was a complex character who did not always act out of malice but instead was also a victim or sought to protect what was hers against the forces from outside. They spoke about how she treated Tita and the adherence to tradition; they also wrote about the political and social backdrop of contemporary Mexico and connected Mamá Elena with the dictatorship. Some very well argued answers also highlighted the way there were events in the novel that were disasters for Tita but not the doing of her mother, such as the death of Nacha. This was an almost equally popular choice out of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate understanding of the motivation and presentation of characters.

La casa de Bernarda Alba

- Q.3 (a) Question 3(a) asked candidates to analyse how Lorca uses symbols in the work. Candidates who answered well were able to organise their responses around analysis of three or four important symbols, such as Bernarda's stick, which they saw as a symbol of authority, punishment and also connected to weakness, as used by a disabled person. They were able to speak about the use of colours in the play, setting the idea of the photographic record at the start of the play in the context of the monochrome photography typical of the era and then the impact of the sudden splash of green. Others talked about the significance of the names of the characters, about the use of water as a symbol of imprisonment in connection with the well and as a route to freedom in connection with the sea, where María Josefa wants to escape to. Some very good answers also referred to Lorca's intended effect of some of the symbols on a contemporary audience (although, of course the play was not ever performed in Spain until after the death of Franco). This was an almost equally popular choice out of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate understanding of the techniques of literary presentation.
- (b) Question 3(b) asked candidates to examine the importance of honour to Bernarda. Candidates who answered well chose to focus on the idea of external appearances and how much it matters to Bernarda that her family is believed to be doing the right thing. However, there was a recognition of the importance of the walls in the maintenance of the honour of the family and its false nature. Whilst all may look well from outside, within the house there is a mad mother, illicit sexual relations, a pregnant, unmarried daughter, a suicide, a thief and a matriarch who is a supporter of a rigid social hierarchy and the very antithesis of Christian charity. Some very good responses dealt with the hypocritical nature of the world we see on the stage and also connected it effectively with wider society at the time and the political backdrop of the second republic. Here were all the ills of a society dominated by pastors and masters and which were agonies suffered by individuals because of the lack of freedom and self-expression. This was an almost equally popular choice out of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate understanding of the social and political context of the work.

Réquiem para un campesino español

- Q.4 (a) Question 4(a) asked candidates to analyse the way in which the presence of Paco, despite his death, dominates the work. Candidates who answered well spoke about the memories of Mosén Millán and the requiem mass. Some very good responses also linked this with Sender's use of literary technique in the novel and the partial and, at times, ambiguous nature of the narrative style. As readers, able candidates saw that we do not really ever reach firm conclusions and need to create a part of the narrative in our minds. This makes for almost as many interpretations as there are readers. Candidates focussed on how we see into the priest's thoughts and make our judgments as much from what is not said as from what is. There was reference to how Paco haunts the novel and some nuanced links were made to the 'romance' and the 'potro'. In terms of religious belief, we see how the spirit of Paco lives on. It is worthy of note that Paco is named in the novel but in the title is merely a Spanish peasant. There is also a vagueness about the place where the events take place. This anyone-anywhere element of the story may serve to extend it more widely to the whole of Spanish society or to lose Paco, Mosén and the village from historical memory and take it under the radar of censorship. This was the less popular choice out of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate understanding of the techniques and style of presentation of the work.
- (b) Question 4(b) asked candidates to analyse the character of Mosén Millán. Candidates who answered well talked about his ambivalent approach to Christian values and the ritualistic nature of his behaviour, connecting this with the idea of the fixed nature of the liturgy of the Catholic church and hence the requiem itself. Mosén was often portrayed as cowardly, passive and venal in his approach. He wanted to maintain his own position of comfortable privilege first and foremost, then he seeks to please the Church authorities. He was seen as typifying, perhaps, a Church that had committed to support for the regime of Franco and squares that with Christian faith by focussing on orthodoxy and tradition, rather than on charity and the poor. Candidates pointed out, for example, how the priest turns a blind eye to poverty but still collects money for the Church. Some also saw how it was left for the reader to judge if Mosén accepts the world as it is or accepts that he is powerless to change it. This was the more popular choice out of the two options and was a question that, in terms of the specification, targeted the requirement to demonstrate understanding of the themes, issues and characterisation of the work.

Guidance for future series

The key areas where there was room for improvement were in the overall marshalling of ideas to form a coherent and well-structured response that consistently targeted and answered the question.

Candidates need to make the whole of their answer an answer to the question asked. To this end, they should not include a catch-all opening paragraph but set out their opening comments in the form of a 'thesis statement' which is the short answer to the question. For example: 'In order to analyse the character of X, we shall look at their relationship with Y because this is at the root of the conflicts in the narrative, how character X is used by the writer to reflect the theme of Z, because this theme underpins the motivation of the character and finally how the narrative structure is reflected through the events that surround the relationship between X and Y.

From there, candidates can structure subsequent paragraphs in depth and detail, perhaps by using the PEA (Point, Evidence, Analysis) technique that many are familiar with from studies of literature in their own language.

Evidence may be in the form of quotations or close reference to the text. Teachers should note the AO3 language credit is not given for quotations and that these are disregarded for this element, because they are the words of the author, not the candidate. However, where a candidate turns a quotation into reported speech, for example, this can score marks for AO3 and so is an area that teachers could develop with their students.

Many examples of planning were seen in the candidate responses and the best were schematic in their approach and followed carefully in execution. These showed evidence of a strategic approach from teachers in training their candidates. Others that were in extended note form were often less successful.

A useful approach can be in the form of a table as follows (examples are generic and by way of guidance):

	Key idea 1	Key idea 2	Key idea 3	Key idea 4
Point	Poverty is a problem			
Evidence 1	The begging in the street			
Evidence 2	The conversation in the bar			
Analysis What the author is doing here	Author makes reader think about how the rich ignore the poor to ease their own conscience.			
How this relates to the question	The character in the question is poor			

This is only one suggestion but this kind of format can, with practice, allow students to plan their responses and to make sure that they are both fully coherent and cover the requirements of the marking scheme. AO4 looks for knowledge AND understanding of the text (points), arguments justified by evidence (evidence) and analytical conclusions (analysis).

Five key pointers for candidates in future series:

1. **Basics** - Make sure all the basics of your Spanish are secure (tenses, agreements etcetera).
2. **Range** - Make sure you have a good range of language, both vocabulary and structures and that you are able to use subordinate clauses well.
3. **Answer** - Make sure your whole essay is actually answering the question that was asked.
4. **Time** - Manage your exam time effectively. You could spend 15 minutes planning the content (AO4), an hour writing the essay and then 15 minutes checking the language (AO3).

Evidence - Choose carefully how you provide evidence (quotations or references to the text) and avoid the temptation to learn some quotations and put them into whatever essay comes up. They must fit well to work as evidence.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team are on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

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ⁱ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.