

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in Spanish(4SP0/02)
Pearson Edexcel Certificate
in Spanish(KSP0/02)

Paper 2: Reading and Writing

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International GCSE/Edexcel Certificate Spanish Paper 2 Reading and Writing Examiners' Report

General comments

The reading and writing paper tests candidates' comprehension of written texts of varying length and complexity via a series of five different question styles: matching pictures with words or statements, choosing a correct missing word, selecting five true statements from a bank of ten and writing answers in Spanish. The reading questions this year covered the topics of directions, health, friends, technology and the traditions of Argentinian cowboys.

There are also two writing exercises, one short and one long. The short writing task (Q3b) asked candidates to write about the time they spend with their friends. The longer writing task (Q6) gave a choice of three topics: writing a diary entry about their daily routine, a letter requesting a job and a blog about a friend's birthday. For each topic, candidates had to respond to four bullet points that gave them the opportunity to write in a range of tenses and to express an opinion. The most popular of these were the job application and the birthday blog.

Q1

This was designed as a multiple-choice task accessible to all levels of ability. Students had to match road signs with phrases such as "todo recto". The phrase that caused the most difficulty was (ii) "cruza el puente", the easiest turned out to be (v) "hasta el centro de la plaza". Most students scored 4 out of 5.

Q2

Students had to choose which of three pictures best represented the content of short phrases about health like "Si estoy mucho tiempo al sol me duele la cabeza". The difference between "pie" and "pierna" was not known by some, causing mistakes in (v). A typical score was 4 out of 5.

Q3a

This question consisted of five statements summarising the comments of three young people talking about spending time with friends. Students had to find a correct word to fill in a blank in the statements, e.g. "Rafael y Mario tienen intereses similares". 3(a)(i) and 3(a)(ii) appeared to be the easiest and 3(a)(iv) "se divierte", the hardest. A score of 4 out of 5 was widely achieved.

3b

Students were asked to respond to the related question "¿Cuánto tiempo pasas con tus amigos? ¿Qué haces con ellos?". Five words or phrases were given as support and the text of Q3b was also a source of useful vocabulary and structures. The majority of candidates achieved full marks as this question is targeted at Grade D and requires only the use of the present tense to be able to access the top mark bands. In many cases students went far beyond the standard necessary, trying to impress by writing more

words than the 50 required for the task, and adding examples of what they used to do with their friends and what they will be doing with their friends next weekend. This was largely successful, but some weaker students who attempted to use different time frames affected the success of their communication because of lack of grammatical knowledge; they would be better to stick to the present tense.

A few students did not mention how much time they spend with their friends, although most successfully merged the two elements of the question into one and talked about specific activities they do and how often they do it, e.g. "salimos a menudo...", "cada sábado vamos de compras". Those who did not mention how much time they spend or who did not mention their friends (writing only about their own hobbies) could not score highly for this. Although the quality of the language used was frequently beyond the standard required, some familiar vocabulary caused problems: "divertido" was not always used successfully: variations of "tenemos divertido" appearing often.

Q4

This question related to a text about a computer designed for children. From a list of ten statements summarising the article, the five correct statements had to be identified. Statements B, E and H were identified by most students. F and J proved to be harder. A score of 4 out of 5 was typical.

Q5

This text was from the *Home and abroad* topic area, specifically *Everyday life, traditions and communities in a Spanish speaking country*. It featured a text about the changing lifestyle of Argentinian gauchos. Many candidates were reliant on direct lifts for their responses but this did not always reveal a good understanding of the article. Many of the 'lifts' were either too long or missing a crucial word so that they did not communicate. This was particularly noticeable in Q5(c)(i) and 5(c)(ii). Many transferred "no comían más que carne" to "no comían más carne" or "no comían carne". In 5(c)(ii), many candidates lifted only "sólo servía como comida para animales" or "la tierra solo servía como comida para animales", neither of which could be credited. Other students, who correctly lifted "no comían más que carne" in 5(c)(ii), clearly did not understand the lack of logic in having given the incorrect answer "eran vegetarianos" in 5(c)(i).

Responses to (d) and (e) caused difficulties; the concept of the freedom experienced at first due to the enormous open spaces and then this being curtailed with the creation of farms was not understood by weaker students. Many incorrectly chose to respond to (d) with "la mayoría vivía en el interior" and to (e) with "el país se convirtió en un popular destino de emigrantes".

Most candidates seemed to respond successfully to 5(f)(i) but 5(f)(ii) was widely misunderstood with many opting for the more general "pasaron a ser unos trabajadores agrícolas", rather than reporting the specific information that the gauchos no longer needed to move animals to market.

Responses to 5(g) were mostly successful but some students commented too generally about the loss of "la vida tradicional". An average mark of 6 out of 10 was achieved.

Q6

This final question required candidates to write an essay which was marked out of 10 for Communication and Content, out of 5 for Knowledge and application of language and 5 for Accuracy. There were several candidates who could not get beyond the 7-8 mark band for Communication and Content as they did not cover all the bullet points that were required for full marks. Overall, the examiners saw many imaginative pieces of writing, showing interesting vocabulary, complex grammar and accurate handling of a variety of tenses. Some less able candidates attempted to narrate events involving overly complicated structures. Grammatical ambition is to be applauded, but low marks for accuracy were a result of candidates knowing what they wanted to say in English, but simply not having the knowledge of Spanish to achieve it. A simpler style, based on a narrower range of structures that could be handled confidently, would often have been rewarded with a higher mark, as the communication would have been more successful.

Option 6(a) was the least popular choice. It gave the chance to write a diary entry and gave rise to some creative pieces with candidates discussing issues such as breaking up with a boy or girlfriend, taking an exam or an accident which they witnessed on the way to school, however, some responses did not make it clear that that day had been different to normal. Many students failed to notice that the last bullet point required them to discuss what they were going to do "en tu casa" next weekend and went on to talk about clubbing or attending concerts with friends, losing the chance to score top marks.

Many students opted for 6(b); this required students to write a letter asking for a job in a restaurant. Unsurprisingly, candidates rarely used "usted" for this letter, but there was no penalty for this. A small number of students wrote asking for a different job or described a job they already had. A disappointing number of responses simply described last year's holiday and could be awarded no marks, in spite of examiners' best efforts to find some element of the response that could be linked with the essay brief. It is essential that students read the brief carefully and ensure that their answer responds to this. No credit can be given to pre-prepared essays; if the content scores 0, then so must the language marks.

Option 6(c) was a popular choice but unfortunately some bullet points were not fully addressed by a number of candidates. With regard to the first, some candidates did not recognise that the past tense was required, and some wrote about their own birthday, rather than a friend's. There was some ambiguity in the response to the second bullet point, which asked for a reason why this birthday was special. Convincing answers were that it was a significant age (e.g. 18) or that it would be the last birthday celebrated together or that friends and family had travelled a great distance as a surprise. Less convincing responses simply said it was special because it was fun. In the third bullet point, some candidates stated that they liked birthdays or presents but did not say anything about birthday parties. Overall the final point was covered well, although at times this related to the friend's next birthday, rather than the writer's.

Overall the outcomes of this paper were similar to results in previous years. Students seemed to have been well-prepared for the exam, but teachers should emphasise the need for students to read the questions carefully both before and after writing their answer.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>