
AS

SPANISH

Paper 2 Writing

Report on the Examination

7691

June 2018

Version: 1.0

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General Comments

In the second year of the new AS specification, the number of students sitting the exam was much smaller than in 2017. However, the paper differentiated well to allow all students regardless of their ability to perform to their best. Teachers should be commended for the excellent way in which students had been prepared. However, the one overarching area for improvement across the paper would be grammatical accuracy, which at times hindered performance this year. This was noticeable across the three sections of the paper.

Section A

Question 1

All of the sentences for translation allowed students to show their ability at different levels. The supporting passage was used well by students, but at times some chose the incorrect lexical item. Students would be advised to think carefully before using words from the supporting text. Overall, grammar was the area most students need further work on to ensure more accurate outcomes with their translations. Teachers are advised that sustained practice of these, potentially as starters or plenaries on a regular basis, will improve student performance in these areas.

- 1.1. This sentence proved to be one of the trickiest in terms of achieving the full three marks. Many students struggled with the high frequency words such as 'its', 'the' and 'a', which sometimes led to them losing marks needlessly. Students would be advised to thoroughly proof read their work before and after writing their essay to ensure they have rendered the translation accurately. The most challenging aspect came with the translation of the word 'lively'; only the best students were able to translate this accurately. Sometimes revision of GCSE vocabulary can be effective to ensure vocabulary is retained. Adjectival agreement also proved tricky for some, showing that even basic grammatical concepts need constant reinforcement, especially with lower ability students.
- 1.2. This sentence was the most accessible for students, with the highest number achieving full marks. The second half of the sentence provided the greatest challenge despite the fact the structure was contained in the supporting passage. Many students failed to conjugate the irregular verb *saber* in the future tense.
- 1.3. Over half of all students achieved two or more marks on this, which was pleasing to note. Many struggled with the reflexive verb *comportarse* and, surprisingly, the expression *demasiado mucho* was seen very frequently. Once again, the importance of revising high frequency words cannot be understated, especially at AS Level.
- 1.4. This sentence proved difficult for a lot of students who struggled with many aspects of the question. 'Spaniards' was not widely known by students, along with the word for 'abroad'. Most seemed more at ease with the regular perfect tense construction and were able to translate the word 'lovers'.
- 1.5. Students struggled with the subjunctive elicited by this sentence. Only the best students were able to use *para que* correctly along with the conjugation of a radical changing verb. The use of the definite article sometimes proved troublesome, and examiners were surprised how the translation of 'by car' was often rendered by *por coche*.

Sections B and C

Examiners reported seeing a whole range in ability in the quality of essays. Many essays showed a cogent and thorough knowledge of the text alongside a capacity to use language spontaneously to answer the question directly. Some students needlessly spent the first paragraph informing the examiner about who the author or director of the text or film was, narrating the story and listing its successes. Students need to ensure that their introductions are concise and that every point made is relevant to the chosen title.

The overwhelming majority of students had studied a film, with almost 90% of the total entry answering on films compared to just over 10% of on books. Once again, there was a strong correlation between excellent performance on the translations and excellent performance on the essays. Although the use of the bullet points is not mandatory, they helped students focus their essays and provided a good framework to follow.

The most popular literary texts were *Como agua para chocolate* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, which between them made up over 60% of the literature entries. The best responses showed a critical response to the title and used examples to justify and explain their ideas. It was pleasing that few students seemed to write a pre-learned essay. Unfortunately, however, it was a pity to see students who had some good ideas fail to convey these unambiguously to the examiner. It is useful to point out that on this paper as a whole there are a substantial number of marks for language, so students need to think carefully about verb conjugations, adjectival agreements and, in particular, pronouns. At times it was felt that students were translating their English thoughts directly, which meant that sometimes their work was incomprehensible. It is worth remembering that students can write an effective essay using the present tense; many struggled needlessly trying to conjugate verbs in the preterite.

The above recommendations are equally valid for students who studied a film. The most popular film, with almost a 45% of the entry, was *El laberinto del fauno*. Here, most students chose to evaluate the relationship between Ofelia and her mother. The best essays showed a clear critical exploration of the two characters. Less able students presented a mere character exploration and did not use the bullets effectively, often choosing to analyse Ofelia's relationship with Mercedes and Vidal but not in relation to what that showed you about Ofelia's relationship with her mother. Students need to read the question carefully and make sure they retain focus on the question set rather than writing the essay they want to write because they have seen a key theme or character in the title.

Volver was the second most popular film amongst students, with almost 25% of the overall entry for this paper. Most students chose the essay about the relationship between Raimunda and Paula, and the best essays showed a clear evaluation of this relationship giving clear examples from the film. Sadly, at times grammar was poor, and examiners often saw invented verbs, for example *suportar* being used to render 'to support'. It was clear that some students knew the film exceptionally well and were able to explore the relationship with ease and show the quality of their Spanish. However, many just told the story; this should be avoided at all costs.

With those students who studied *Ocho apellidos vascos*, most chose to answer the question about the representation of the Andalusian identity. Many students seemed to believe that the stereotypes represented are completely true; these students should be advised to make the distinction between the film's representation and real life. The best students evaluated well and gave lots of examples from the film. Some responses were more descriptive than evaluative, and

some struggled with the contrast element, merely writing about the Basque identity rather than exemplifying the contrasts.

With regards to *María, llena eres de gracia* most students chose the essay on María and the notion that she was a victim. This idea was explored well by most students, but at times less able students merely told the story and wove in elements of past questions. This trend was more noticeable in the second question, which referred to American culture; some responses seemed to focus on María's decision to stay.

Overall, grammatical knowledge is key to success on this paper, not merely in the translation section but also in the essay, where it enables students to articulate effectively their ideas with regards to their study of a film or book. Next year will see the first entry from students who have taken the reformed GCSE, and it will be interesting to see if this has an impact in this area.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.