

**GCE**



**Chief Examiner's and  
Principal Moderator's  
Report  
Spanish**

**Summer Series 2023**





## Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk).



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## GCE Spanish

### Chief Examiner's Report

#### Assessment Unit AS 1 Speaking

This year saw a return to all candidates sitting the speaking test and for many, this will have been their first formal oral examination.

##### Visiting arrangements

Examiners try to be as accommodating and flexible with the dates as they can and appreciate the efforts that teachers make to smooth this process. Examiners commented on how welcome they were made to feel at the centres they visited, including the hospitality provided which was much appreciated.

The accommodation was fine for most centres but unfortunately there were issues with excessive noise in some, due to school bells and classes nearby. When selecting the examination room, it could be useful to share with centre Examination Officers the recommendations regarding accommodation provided in CCEA's 'AS Examinations Summer 2023 Modern Languages Instructions and Guidance to Teachers and Candidates Conduct and Administration of AS Modern Languages Speaking Tests (Revised)'. This booklet aims to help with the organisation of the Speaking Test and to ensure that all candidates have an equitable and positive experience of the examination.

As a point of housekeeping, it is extremely useful for examiners when centres provide a printed schedule with candidate names and numbers on the day.

##### Presentation

In some cases, there was only a tenuous link with Spain or a Spanish-speaking country. Candidates and teachers should be reminded that the presentation must be based on AS themes related to aspects of Spanish-speaking countries or communities. If unsure about a topic, please check with CCEA. This year again, as well as the ever-popular topics such as 'la corrida de toros' and 'la rivalidad entre Barcelona FC y Real Madrid FC', many were more varied and often very original. Some examples were:

- El boxeo mexicano
- El béisbol en Cuba
- El turismo en Machu Picchu
- Las cervezas de España
- El turismo y el agua en España
- La historia del Silbón
- La discriminación sexual en la industria cinematográfica.
- La apropiación cultural del Día de los Muertos.
- El camino de Santiago – ¿una oportunidad para hacer el mal?
- El éxito de la gastronomía española
- ¿Deberían prohibirse los concursos de belleza en Venezuela?
- ¿Es la música reggaetón apta para todos los oídos hispanohablantes?
- La siesta – la superpotencia española

- La influencia árabe en España
- El papel de los animales en las tradiciones españolas
- Los artistas hispanos con mayor influencia en el mundo del arte
- La Rave en La Peza
- La industria del cine español
- Los críticos de la Comunidad Valenciana
- El fenómeno del fútbol en Argentina

Even some topics which have featured frequently in this part of the examination were covered with a degree of originality. Examples include 'El Camino de Santiago' with reference to wheelchair participants or 'San Fermín' but seen from the perspective of animal rights. However, it should be noted that some topics were too broad for candidates, and they struggled to cover the information in any depth. Candidates should look closely at the wording of the assessment objectives when selecting and then drafting their presentation.

Students gave the impression of being extremely well prepared (no doubt the vital role of the language assistant merits credit in the best cases) and marks were generally high. The best presentations stuck closely to the recommended timings and included detailed knowledge and qualitative judgements as well as real engagement in their topic.

Some linguistic issues to be aware of include the pronunciation of common words like difícil, fácil, ciudad; stressing the accented letter e.g., llegó; word order e.g., \*'mi favorita cosa'; as well as ongoing issues such as the correct use of words like me gusta, me encanta and prefiero.

### **Conversation**

This part of the oral examination is a general conversation about the candidates, their lives and interests, including topics such as family, friends, free time, stress and holidays. Whilst the topic of school is no longer on the AS topic list, many candidates introduced it themselves, using their knowledge of the topic from GCSE, as well as chatting comfortably about their part-time jobs. The general standard of spoken Spanish at AS level is very encouraging and a tribute to the work done by Spanish teachers and assistants. In most cases, candidates had prepared thoroughly for the conversation test, engaged well and made a good attempt to develop discussion when asked about a particular topic. The best candidates engaged in a genuine exchange of information and opinions on a wide range of topics in a very natural way.

Some candidates incorporated higher-level phrases and subjunctives, thereby improving their chances of accessing the top band. Common errors included: manipulation of verbs, including a change of person, especially, again, the use of gustar and encantar; switching from one tense to another; and basic agreement of adjectives. It was, however, pleasing to note the number of candidates who self-corrected, when they realised that they had made a mistake.

### **Overall standard**

These have been challenging years for everyone and no less so for our linguists, yet the standard remains as high as ever in this unit. Whilst there was evidence of the normal nerves, candidates were well prepared and moved comfortably between topics. It is evident that teachers and Spanish assistants have worked hard with candidates to build fluency and confidence amongst their students, and they are to be commended for this.



## Assessment Unit AS 2      Listening, Reading and Use of Language

This paper was well received by candidates and performance overall was extremely impressive. Examiners felt that it was very fair and accessible for candidates at this level. The wide range of marks seemed to indicate that it allowed for successful discrimination between candidates.

### Section A      Listening

This section did not present any identifiable problems and examiners felt it was a very fair, accessible listening examination. In terms of more specific issues, here are some comments:

- Q1** Candidates coped very well with this question on the topic of ‘Rubí, la quinceañera más famosa de internet’. Where issues did arise, it was often clear that candidates did not fully understand what they heard and this led to poor attempts to replicate, in writing, what they had heard. Examiners, as ever, are keen to be indulgent where the balance between understanding and communication are within tolerance, but where attempts were too far removed from the correct version, no marks were awarded. For example,
- (b) Very few candidates demonstrated an understanding of ‘casas humildes’ and attempted to guess the answer phonetically.
  - (d) Poor spelling, such as ‘sedecientas’ or ‘triente’ were not accepted.
  - (f) Many missed the idea that Rubí was ‘asustada’ in response to, the question: ‘¿Cómo reaccionó?’
  - (g) Only the better candidates were able to provide the full information, ‘ganador de la carrera de caballos’.
- Q2** Candidates found this question on the topic of ‘El banco de la amistad’ more challenging as they had to demonstrate that they had understood by answering in English.
- (c) Many did not grasp the idea of blackmail or humiliation.
  - (d) ‘Valor’ was not known by most of the candidates.
  - (f) This question caused most problems. Some picked up the gist of the answer but most failed to gain all three marks due to a lack of coherence in their explanation.
  - (h) Many were confused by the verb ‘experimentar’ and did not get the idea of ‘experience/find/get support and comfort’.

### Section B      Reading

In general, this paper was considered fair and allowed most candidates to respond positively to the questions.

- Q1** The Reading comprehension task on the topic of ‘Los jóvenes, más tiempo en casa y menos tiempo en fiestas gracias a la tecnología’ was generally addressed competently. In this section, there is always a temptation to just transcribe partially or even comprehensively the wording of the section of the passage that seems to relate to the question, without ensuring that the answer provides a grammatically logical answer to the question formulated. As a result, answers, while close, did not in fact answer the question and meaning was absent. It is important not to rush into unthinking transcription but ensure that the nature of the question is understood, and the presentation of the selected information is such as to actually answer the question.

Marks were lost in the following instances:

- (a) Some did not introduce the two infinitives properly and so lost marks.
- (d) Some did not get the idea of 'todavía les gusta salir'.
- (e) Many lost a mark by failing to mention 'ya no ven televisión tradicional'.

## Q2 Translation

The translation was very accessible possibly because the topic, 'El peligro de los "reality shows" para los jóvenes' was very familiar to them. This question produced some very high marks and very few scored less than 10/20. Some candidates lost marks due to a lack of attention to detail, e.g., lack of capital letters on Love Island and British; using the spelling 'who's';

'Medio mundo' translated as half the world; 'quedarse con una fortuna' wrongly translated; 'se arrepintieron' not known.

## Section C Use of Language

While there were signs of a slight improvement in the standard of answers in this section, it was still noticeable that, for whatever reason, there was evidence of a lack of foundation in basic grammar in many responses.

**Q5** The translation sentences are always an area that differentiates between stronger and weaker candidates. This year's sentences provided good candidates with the opportunity to show how firm their grasp of grammatical structures is.

In general, accents were frequently omitted; the 'a' was rarely seen after 'aprendí'; 'dijeron' was usually misspelt; only a minority showed their awareness of the need to use 'e' rather than 'y' in the phrase 'Ana e Isabel'.

The overall performance in this unit was pleasing. Examiners were heartened to see how well many candidates performed given the fact that this cohort was still affected by less classroom teaching time due to the pandemic.

## Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

This paper was well received with no issues raised. As in previous years, candidates seemed to find it accommodating, with a sufficient range of accessible questions that tested their knowledge of the texts. The relative popularity of the different texts remains unchanged. Solas continues to be slightly more popular than El Bola. La lengua de las mariposas follows a close third. The novel Como agua para chocolate is still popular with some centres and students have a good grounding in its themes and style. As we often note, this is a demanding paper, but the bullet points give a scaffolding to the answer which most find helpful and follow, with the better candidates knowing that the bullet points are there at the service of the main question and that the latter is the important thing. Candidates score best when they attend to the needs of the question and reflect this in their introductions and conclusions. These are parts of the question where the focus of the answer can be highlighted and therefore a perfunctory, catch-all introduction or one that simply rephrases the question without trying to give an indication of the candidate's take is a missed opportunity. Similarly, a conclusion which merely reiterates the question asked, or one that makes very speculative suggestions, rhetorical questions or a general attempt to link the question to current actuality is less effective than a clear and concise iteration of the candidate's answer to the question asked.

Answers tend to vary in terms of length and there is no fixed rule about this other than common sense. The good students avoided the extremes of the long, rambling and unfocused essay or the too short answer which failed to cover enough of the issues raised.

While it is understandable in the context of an examination, candidates should avoid rushing headlong into an answer to the question without fully understanding its implications. This year that was particularly relevant to Question 1(b). Time spent at the start analysing the question and mentally planning your answer is time very well used.

Part 1(a) was a popular choice and clearly students are very familiar with the relationship between María and her mother, Rosa. However, again, an over-emphasis on the bullet points alone led many candidates to simply list different incidents of their relationship, showing reasonable knowledge of the film, while others more successfully analysed how and why the relationship evolved. That said, this was well answered by the vast majority of candidates. In Part 1(b) most candidates were caught out by the wording of the question which clearly asks how getting to know María is a positive thing for don Emilio and helps him. Many candidates, due to a rushed reading of the question, wrote what was perhaps most expected, that is, how don Emilio helps María. In many cases, in the course of the latter they did address indirectly the question and examiners were generous, as ever, in their approach. One examiner did comment on how in cases where María's impact on don Emilio was done, it was very impressively done.

In Question 2, Part (b) was slightly more popular than Part (a). The relationship between Moncho and the maestro is by now well understood but candidates sometimes had difficulty dealing with don Gregorio's principles so often the answers limited themselves to recounting incidents. Overall, while the human story of *La lengua* is a popular and powerful one, candidates might benefit from being encouraged to dig deeper into the wider themes and, in particular, their historical context. The film is a beautiful universal coming-of-age story, but it is equally a very deliberate and thoughtful treatment of a pivotal ideological clash in Spanish society at a very crucial time in its history. In Part 2(b) there were some candidates who tended to focus on one parent more than the other but there were good accounts of the conflicted emotions at the end of the film.

In Part 3(a) as was said about Part 2(a) most candidates had a good grasp of the relationship between Pablo and his father but struggled in many cases to do justice to the last half of the question which required a careful treatment of how Pablo evolves towards an ability to escape his mistreatment. Still, in most cases this was very competently answered and in Part (b) there were good signs of a thorough understanding of the implications of the film. The questions were understood clearly, and it led to unproblematic responses, though of varying quality, mostly good to excellent. One examiner noted how candidates 'tended to miss the opportunity to discuss the abstract nature of the conversations between Pablo and Alfredo to highlight the alternative reality that Pablo experiences and the insights into Alfredo's more liberal beliefs compared to (Pablo's) more traditional ones.

*Como agua* is a demanding text at this level, one year out from GCSE. The novel is deceptively complex and multilayered, and the language is challenging. There are still some signs, maybe because of this, of candidates' knowledge of the novel being restricted to the main incidents rather than other elements of the rich texture of the novel. The evolution of Tita's struggle with her affections in a constantly changing situation, both personally and socially, is covered in many sections of the novel and repays close reading. Some candidates' answers suggest they may be juggling with an abridged version of the story. In Part (b), again, there are good signs of a sound understanding of the different personalities of the sisters. On some occasions there was tendency to simply describe each sister in turn without exploring their mutual interaction and influence. Sometimes there was an imbalance in attention to one sister or the other. Several answers were about Gertrudis as a character.

## General comments

Examiners remarked very strongly on the issue of illegible handwriting. While this is a perennial issue it should still be given due weight as there are signs that many candidates who do, through no fault of their own, have handwriting that is not very legible are, notwithstanding, seemingly not even trying to mitigate this as much as possible. Many examiners commented on the lower level of overall performance at AO3 which may be due to a variety of factors, not least, recent events beyond the control of teachers or candidates. Still, it needs to be noted that there is a step-up in level at AS which in many cases candidates are struggling to manage. Most examiners noted problems with genders, tenses, the personal 'a', prepositions in general, de, que, non-use or over-use of the reflexive and a general uncertainty about pronouns, both direct and indirect. The use of 'a' in structures like: 'Al padre de Pablo le importa ...', or 'A Tita le afecta...' proved a regular problem for many candidates. 'Gustar' (as with similar verbs like 'faltar', 'importar', 'encantar' 'preocupar') and its construction in sentences needs reinforcement with candidates. The unusual tendency of using 'este' when it should be the neutral 'esto' continues, which is puzzling. Accents seem to be treated with great inconsistency as are subjunctives with candidates, sometimes the same ones, getting excellent uses of the subjunctive while missing other more straightforward ones. Consistent mistakes like: \*'Al final de la película la familia de Moncho vean a la detención de don Gregorio.' \*'Al principio, los padres de Moncho gustan don Gregorio' \*'Rosa lo dice gritar insultos' \*'Moncho solo tengo ocho años asi que no escucha' \*'es jóven y todavía puede está influido', were common.

## Assessment Unit A2 1

## Speaking

As at AS level, this year saw a return to all candidates sitting the speaking test and for many, this will have been their first ever formal oral examination.

### Visiting arrangements

Examiners try to be as accommodating and flexible with the dates as they can and appreciate the efforts that teachers make to smooth this process. Examiners commented on how welcome they were made to feel at the centres they visited, including the hospitality provided which was much appreciated.

The accommodation was fine for most centres but unfortunately there were issues with excessive noise in some, due to school bells and classes nearby. When selecting the examination room, it could be useful to share the CCEA pointers re accommodation in the "A2 Examinations Summer 2023 Modern Languages Instructions and Guidance to Teachers and Candidates Conduct and Administration of AS Modern Languages Speaking Tests (Revised)" with centre Examination Officers. This booklet aims to help with the organisation of the Speaking Test and to ensure that all candidates have an equitable and positive experience of the examination.

Without wishing to cause inconvenience, examiners welcome having a printout of the running order on the day. They are also grateful for the wonderful hospitality offered by the centres.

### Discussion

With some issues in recent years in terms of the topics selected for the A2 discussion, including earlier periods in history, it seems timely to remind centres of the process for selecting a topic, as detailed in the guidance booklet.

"Culture: Candidates study a cultural aspect of the target language country or community, for example the arts, music, sport, folklore, festivals or traditions; or Historical period: Candidates study a historical period from the twentieth century of the target language country or community; or Region: Candidates study a region of the target language country or community.

Additional Guidance: As the term Culture has a broad range of interpretation it is necessary to give some additional guidance on this matter. The discussion should be on a general theme and should not focus on a single film, text or individual.”

If there is any doubt about the suitability of a topic, centres should not hesitate to contact CCEA.

This year, the following interesting topics were very popular:

- La Mara Salvatrucha (Las Maras)
- La presencia de la cultura incaica en el Ecuador actual
- La influencia árabe en España
- La historia del feminismo en México
- El declive de la Amazonía en Colombia
- La decadencia latinoamericana
- El impacto de los eventos en Cuba en 1962
- La identidad regional española.

Centres are encouraged to stick to CCEA’s deadlines in terms of submitting the fully completed summary sheets in February. At A2, these sheets are essential to enable the examiner to prepare thoroughly for the examination and it can cause delays and stress if they are submitted excessively late. Most candidates had prepared very well for the Discussion element of the exam, with the vast majority completing an introduction of an appropriate length. Centres are reminded that this introduction should not overlap with the first bullet point but could be seen as an opportunity for the candidate to set the context and their aims for the discussion. Examiners are instructed to keep the discussion as close as possible to six minutes. Invariably this will mean that candidates who have prepared a vast amount of information for their topic will leave without having conveyed all this information to the examiner. This does not mean that they have not accessed the top band, but this should be taken as a note of caution and advice, given the amount of extra work this will have entailed. The best candidates provided analysis of their chosen topic, giving their opinion, and engaging in a genuine discussion on each bullet point, rather than producing five mini-monologues.

### **Conversation**

During the conversation, candidates covered a variety of topics relevant to themselves such as family, school, plans for the future, part-time jobs, pastimes and holidays. All were given an opportunity to discuss topics relevant to the A2 course during the nine-minute conversation. Many candidates spoke naturally and responded readily to the examiner’s questions, feeling confident to lead the conversation in the direction they wanted. It is essential to note that at no stage should the candidate tell the examiner a list of topics that they wish to talk about, neither before the examination nor when the recording has started.

Unfortunately, some candidates still have trouble using verbs such as ‘gustar’, as well as problems with tenses and agreements. On the other hand, many candidates smoothly introduced a wide range of vocabulary including idioms and complex language.

### **Overall standard**

It was an absolute pleasure to listen to so many of these oral examinations. For a substantial number of candidates, this module was their first ever external speaking examination; this deserves praise and recognition. As always, massive recognition is due to their teachers and language assistants who have worked hard with them. The overall excellent standard observed is testament to this.

## Assessment Unit A2 2

## Listening and Reading

### Listening

The performance of the candidates showed a return to normality post-pandemic is still ongoing. Examiners felt that weaknesses in vocabulary expected at this level were much in evidence; for example, words such as digna, ser dueño, chavales, desalojar, proceso, lanzarse, desierto. Large numbers also presented a challenge for candidates (i.e., 500,000). The tendency, remarked earlier, to resort to often indiscriminate transcription can lead to marks being lost. Questions should be read carefully, and the answer drafted in such a way as to provide an answer clearly and logically to the question formulated.

- Q1**
- (a)** This question required the students to add two items of information to obtain one mark and many produced only one, therefore losing a mark. The required answer was: “El derecho a una vivienda digna y el derecho a ser dueño de una propiedad”. Answers that included versions such as: \*adigna; \*con la digna; \*dogna; vivir dignamente; hacer dueño (instead of ser dueño) were not acceptable.
  - (b)** Most candidates generally answered this question correctly. However, a few wrote things like: \*chaballes or chivales (instead of chavales), para parar un piso (instead of para pagar un piso), making it obvious that they did not understand the material in the recording, or simply wrote ocupantes or personas, which was not specific enough and did not get any credit.
  - (c)** Many candidates missed the first point: Los tribunales están colapsados. Errors such as writing “profeso” (instead of proceso) lost credit for that part of the answer as it showed a lack of understanding.
  - (d)** Many candidates missed the fact that two clear and separate points had to be made in order to get two points. The examiners accepted “personas con problemas o con necesidades” for “personas vulnerables”. However, those candidates who wrote \*“de solohar” or \*“de salohar” were not given any credit, as it was obvious that they had not understood the material in the recording.
  - (e)** A few candidates missed the essential phrase: “usuarios de sus servicios”, losing the available mark. Also, writing “vivir ilegalmente” was not enough (the word “ilegalmente” on its own could refer to other things). Also, the word “vacíos” had to be included in the response.
  - (f)** This question required more manipulation of the language. Many candidates just transcribed what was heard, not modifying their answer to properly respond to the question posed, therefore losing one mark. Candidates needed to include in their answer why 44% of the users lost their house. They needed to have: “Debido a la crisis económica”/“A causa de la crisis económica”. Simply transcribing what they heard was not enough.
- Q2**
- (b)** A few candidates had problems with the number 500,000.
  - (c)** This question was generally answered correctly by most candidates. However, some candidates lost marks due to inaccurate expression in English or incomplete comprehension: e.g., “get up the train” or “how to make the journey” were not accepted. Julio teaches them “cómo subir a”, that is, how to get onto, board, get up onto.
  - (d)** The expression “...se lanzan hacia el tren” caused some confusion for candidates. The idea is that of a surge towards the train. Examiners would accept “launch themselves towards” but versions of “launch themselves at the train”, “throw themselves at the train” or “jump on the train” missed the point.

- (f) Most candidates answered the question correctly. However, words like “traffickers” or “cartels” on their own, or “people traffickers” was insufficiently specific or incorrect.
- (g) Many candidates missed the idea of women preparing food for the migrants and throwing it onto the train while it was moving. Examiners also could not accept the word “people”, as the point was that this was a women-specific activity.
- (h) This question was well answered. However, the word “desierto” had to be in their answer in order to achieve the available mark.

## Reading

**Q1** This was a challenging exercise, especially for weaker students who clearly struggled with the meaning of the word options given. Weak knowledge of grammar also created problems for some candidates in this exercise where words could be accepted or eliminated based on grammaticality. There were problems differentiating the use of the infinitive and the gerund or choosing the correct use of object pronouns and the present subjunctive. Very few candidates managed to achieve full marks in this exercise.

**Q2** In general, candidates were able to perform well in this exercise because they simply transcribed sentences from the text. As we have noted frequently and throughout this report, however, this can be a dangerous strategy if careful thought is not applied. As with the listening, careful reading of the question is always advised as these are carefully crafted to direct attention to the correct information.

In Part (b), to achieve two of the three points available, candidates needed to include in their answer “los beneficios económicos y sociales y las oportunidades”.

In Part (c), to achieve one of the two points available, candidates needed to include in their answer “desde los años 50”.

In Parts (f) and (g), the higher ability candidates were able to successfully manipulate the language to give the correct answer. Candidates who could not manipulate the language and had difficulty understanding the exact meaning of these questions, inevitably lost marks.

**Q3** This exercise was done well by most students, though it is evident that there is some uncertainty about the broad principles unpinning the art of summary. This is the one task that requires quite sophisticated use of English. The requirement to condense meaning into a smaller number of words is a test of the candidate’s sense of word-order, their ability to find terminology that concisely sums up an idea expressed less briefly in the text and the sensitivity to the distinguish general ideas from specific instances or examples are all useful techniques which require practice but can yield dividends in this question. To achieve full marks in this instance, candidates needed to include the following points: achievements to date in women’s rights; remaining instances of inequality and discrimination; difficulties for women in the workplace; problems due to education and having children and the current state of progress in Spain. The omission of the important reference to Spain was a cause of lost marks. Most of them managed to complete the exercise within the word limit.

**Q4** This year there were some signs of difficulty with what at this level should be considered basic vocabulary and use of tenses. Some candidates seemed to struggle with vocabulary such as to get up, going for a walk, turning the laptop on, saving time, petrol, to really love, to be surprising, companies and employees. Also, there were difficulties producing simple expressions such as “echar de menos” or “cuando me apetece”, even with “una taza de café” (or even better “un café”).

Regarding grammar, distinction between the preterite and the imperfect tenses continues to challenge many candidates. Examiners did not award full marks to candidates for using the preterite in the 1st and 2nd sections in the following sentences:

“...tuve que levantarme a las seis de la mañana...” (instead of “...tenía que levantarme a las seis de la mañana...”)

“...porque tardé una hora...” (instead of “...porque tardaba una hora...”)

“...llegué totalmente estresado/a” (instead of “...llegaba totalmente estresado/a”).

In the last section, some candidates lost marks for not recognising when to use the subjunctive:

“No es de sorprender que cada vez más compañías estén permitiendo/ permitan a sus empleados trabajar/ que ... trabajen desde casa”.

## Assessment Unit A2 3 Extended Writing

Based on the performance observed, the candidates and examiners found this paper fair and accessible with no major issues affecting performance. There were good signs of candidates attempting to structure their answer well in order to address the specifics of the question.

As always, the introduction and conclusion are vital for showing that from the outset, the candidate has understood the brief set by the question and has formulated a view as to how they will answer it, with the support of the points made in the body of the essay. The conclusion becomes a short summing up in new terms of what the response to the question has been, a chance to underline the main point made and leave the reader with a clear and impressive idea of what the candidate's take has been. Yet, there is always the temptation to start with three or four lines telling us who wrote the play or book and when and where it is set. This is unnecessary. The best candidates started their answer by immediately addressing the key point of the question.

Length is not penalised or specially rewarded. Rather, clear focus and three or four solid points addressing the question are. If an essay is too short or too long it will tend to suffer anyway in terms of the Assessment Objectives.

Lorca remains the overwhelming choice of most centres, followed at a distance by Sender. Neruda trails in third place and Muñoz Molina struggles to get off the starting grid. It is a pity that *El dueño del secreto* is not attempted by some centres. It is a very well-written and accessible text on a relatively recent period of Spain's history by one of the country's foremost authors.

Both Lorca questions were equally popular and candidates will have been unsurprised by the themes covered. In Part (a) while students are very familiar and no doubt prepared for an essay on Bernarda's character, the best answers were those that made a continuous effort to address the main points: *entender, pero no justificar* and *actitudes y comportamiento*. In Part (b) students had a good grasp of the examples of class difference that are highlighted in the play, especially in the opening sections. Some may have felt that this was an insufficient base for their answer, and tried to widen it to other aspects that were unrelated, in particular the difference between the sexes, sometimes explicitly justifying this as part of the class conflict. This argument was hard to sustain and sometimes seemed a result of the candidate trying to insert the topic they would prefer to have written upon. Questions can often focus on what might seem minor aspects but there will always be plenty to write a good solid 400 (approx.) word essay. In fact, it can help with focus and such aspects will inevitably permeate in some way the whole work. There is never a need to pad out the essay with superfluous or unrelated material.



Very occasionally a candidate will do this quite blatantly by stating they do not agree that an issue is that important and go on to write about what they consider to be a more significant issue. This approach is not recommended.

The small number of answers on *Réquiem* tended to be of a very high quality, based on a sound knowledge of the text and its themes, and careful in their construction of an argument relevant to the question. Perhaps, those who chose Part (b) tended to ignore a little too often the last part of the question which was simply a way of getting them to discuss how the novel leaned in its overall message about social injustice and what ways this could be detected.

The candidates who chose to answer on Neruda were generally of a high quality. The *Veinte poemas* seems to have a group of centres that enjoy and admire the poetry and it often shows in their answers. There were less signs of candidates cherry-picking quotations or images that suited an argument but were maybe overly decontextualised or viewed in isolation. Answers tended to show how particular poems, in the round illustrated varying aspects of the themes referred to in the question, and this yielded dividends in terms of higher marks.

### Overall comments

In terms of writing style, there were many examples of candidates writing flowing sophisticated Spanish which show-cased not only individual talent, but also excellent preparatory work on behalf of teachers and assistants. Particularly noticeable is the good work done in equipping the candidates with useful structuring terms. Many study guides give advice on this. The Collins dictionary in its *Lengua y Uso* section has a wealth of suggestions for structuring an essay. Connecting phrases are important to give the essays coherence and to sign-post your argument. However, these phrases must not be an end in themselves and overdoing phrases of the type: *Es importante que ...*, can easily tip into an appearance of padding. Examples include:

Es importante que reconozcamos que Bernarda tiene cinco hijas.

Está claro que después de la muerte de su segundo marido, impone un luto de ocho años a sus hijas.

No se puede negar que se preocupa en (sic) su buena apariencia, ...

Es innegable que Bernarda, ...

Es imprescindible que nos demos cuenta que cuando todas van a misa...

Es obvio que Bernarda es autoritaria cuando dice...

Such repetition of structure is best avoided.

Despite this, examiners were yet again hugely impressed by the way candidates rise to the occasion of this challenging unit and there were numerous examples of outstanding performances with displays of mature analysis and comment conveyed in confident and correct Spanish.

## Contact details

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