

SPANISH (SHORT COURSE)

Paper 1344/01
Speaking

Key comments

Candidates should:

- present their introduction 'naturally'.
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- provide evidence of research.
- show interest and personal engagement with the topic.
- support opinions with evidence.
- avoid sweeping statements.

Candidates should also expect to:

- be interrupted.
- be asked to support statements.
- be asked unexpected questions.
- be asked about the sub-headings in a different order from that provided in the form.
- give examples.
- be stretched linguistically to their ceiling.

General comments

Candidate performance was very good overall this year. Candidates seemed to have dedicated a great amount of time and effort to research their chosen topics of discussion, giving them the necessary knowledge and confidence to take the lead in the discussion. Candidates showed initiative and often demonstrated an impressive range of opinions.

In the Topic section candidates were normally able to cope with the different questions that came up in the discussion, giving credit to their preparation and skill. As in previous years, *que yo sepa* was perhaps a curious idiom to choose when setting out factual points on topics the candidates had spent the previous year researching, so it is perhaps best to avoid in this section of the exam.

The choice of Topics was very broad and we welcomed the inclusion of cultural topics of various fields.

Control of grammatical accuracy remained a challenge and some candidates struggled with adjective agreements, which is a requirement to be able to rate one's performance in Spanish as accurate. Some candidates included set expressions containing subjunctives but many missed the use of both present and imperfect subjunctives specially when triggered by negative antecedents. Around one third the type 2 or type 3 *si* clauses attempted did not achieve the correct combination of tenses.

The use of idioms was overall very good, although at times not used in the correct context. As in previous years the use of the term *personas* was too frequent when a number of alternatives is available such as *consumidores*, *ciudadanos*, *alumnos*, etc.

This year there were a few cases where the topic of choice was not linked to the culture of a country where the language is spoken, as defined by the Pre U Syllabus. With that in mind, we could recommend candidates to anchor their Topic title to a specific country in those cases where it may not be obvious.

SHORT COURSE SPANISH

Paper 1344/02
Listening, Reading and Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the examiner in unambiguous language.

General comments

Candidates seemed to find the material in the examination accessible, and this was reflected in good and relevant responses. Some very good responses were seen in all three parts. The best performing candidates responded in detail and demonstrated a wide-ranging, accurate knowledge of vocabulary and an ability to use complex sentence structures.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Listening Comprehension

Listening Text 1 was an item about fracking in the north of Spain. Candidates were given a printed summary of the extract with five gaps left blank. Below the summary, they were offered a choice of three words or phrases to complete the sentences and had to underline the most appropriate option. The material was understood well by candidates and generally the correct options were chosen, although some candidates chose *ha iniciado un programa de extracción con fracking* rather than *tiene la intención de iniciar investigaciones sobre el fracking* for **Question 3**.

The extract for **Listening Text 2** was an extract in which the Spanish psychologist, Ana Sánchez talked about children and traffic. The exercise, involving straightforward Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally done well. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. All the relevant information must be given but candidates are not required to answer in full sentences. The Examiners only mark what is correct. All irrelevant and superfluous information is disregarded, unless it adversely affects the correct target information. Most of the questions were understood and candidates wrote appropriate replies. For **Question 6**, most candidates scored both marks, but some lost the second mark by not understanding *llevar* and writing *su niña lleva en coche* [sic]. It was necessary to convey the idea of parents fearing for the safety of the children in **Question 7**, which only about half managed to do. **Question 8** proved a little difficult for some who couldn't get across the idea of eliminating the risks for young children. In **Question 9**, nearly all candidates managed the first part of the answer but failed to give all the information for the second part, usually missing out that the figures related to last year. **Question 10** also caused problems for a lot of candidates who failed to communicate the idea of travelling to and from school. **Question 11**, too, confused a few candidates who seemed to get the information for the first part the wrong way round. That is, some wrote that a child has more peripheral vision than an adult. **Question 12** caused no problems as there were three acceptable options for just one mark.

In **Listening Text 3** candidates heard an interview with Joaquín Soriano, a famous Spanish pianist. The material certainly appeared to be accessible and candidates made a good attempt at answering the English questions set on it. Some candidates were not awarded a mark because of an awkward answer in English that did not convey the information correctly. Overall, there was evidence of a good level of comprehension.

Part II: Reading

There were three passages with reading comprehension questions in Spanish and in English. Language accuracy is not taken into account as long as it does not impede communication.

Reading Text 1 was a short article about how the town council of Potes was offering to pay €400 for each birth in the town. The material was understood by the candidates and the exercise, involving multiple choice options, was generally well done.

The passage used for **Reading Text 2** was a longer article about the growth of e-commerce in Latin America. The text had Spanish-language questions and answers set on it. Generally, the material was understood very well and most candidates answered the questions correctly with confidence. It is essential that candidates should use their own words rather than attempt to reproduce the original text word for word. They must also ensure that they give the full information required to gain the marks available. All of the questions were understood well by candidates, although quite a few were struggled to understand the meaning of *tiempos revueltos* in **Question 33**, and most were not able to clearly grasp, for **Question 35**, that people from middle to low socioeconomic backgrounds now buy online whilst two years ago they didn't consider doing so.

Reading Text 3 was an article about the benefits of consuming olive oil. The material was generally well understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the passage in a fluent, comprehensible way. It appears that the candidates found the material accessible and gave appropriate answers.

Part III: Guided Writing

Candidates were given a choice of two texts and had to write a response of 220–250 words in Spanish, based on a series of five bullet points. The material contained in the two extracts was clearly accessible to candidates and candidates succeeded in writing appropriate responses in a good level of fluent Spanish. The two options were equally popular and a variety of interesting essays were seen.

The first article discussed the extent to which many people now go to pursue sport and exercise. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to it, giving their opinion on whether sport could become an obsession and whether young people in their country did enough sport, and then moving on to discuss the salaries of some famous sports personalities and the extent to which sport has become a business as opposed to a pastime. The candidates who chose this option were clearly familiar with the concepts and the vocabulary needed and produced some good answers.

The second article discussed a report about the increase in the number of brown bears in the north of Spain. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, giving their reaction to it and discussing the current situation of the brown bear. They then needed to discuss the relationship between humans and animals and to assess the importance of protecting animals in danger of extinction in today's world. Finally, they were asked to consider the relative importance of protecting animals in a world in which there is so much poverty. The candidates who chose this option provided some interesting responses to the task.

The response is marked according to the published marking grids. Firstly, the essay is marked for Content according to the task set and the bullet points, bearing in mind originality and development of ideas. Then the Quality of Language is assessed, taking into account both accuracy and variety of lexis, as well as structure and to what extent errors impede comprehension. Candidates are expected to use an acceptable formal letter format and to write within the word limits.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- Remember that full sentences are not required. However, the full information asked for must be given.
- Highlight the question words (¿quién?, ¿cómo?, ¿cuándo?, etc.), so that it is clear what information is needed.
- Note how many marks are awarded for each question, so that no essential information is omitted.

- Try to use your own words and do not reproduce the language of the texts word for word.
- Practise building a wide Spanish vocabulary, so that you are at ease using synonyms for words in the texts.
- Remember that your Spanish answers must make sense. If they do not, then there is something wrong.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers in good English and check your spelling.
- Beware of 'false friends' (words that look alike in Spanish and English but have different meanings).
- Realise that some Spanish words can often have two meanings; choose the correct one.
- Find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the Spanish word.
- Make sure your whole answer sounds like real English and makes sense to someone reading it.
- Make sure that you give the full information required; do not omit any essential information.

Guided Writing

Covering the content

- Read the two stimulus passages and decide quickly which one you wish to tackle.
- Pick the topic that most appeals to you and is most in accordance with your strengths.
- Ensure that you have enough knowledge to tackle the question and enough vocabulary associated with the topic.
- Read the chosen stimulus text again: analyse it to grasp the aim, content and context of the passage and to note key words and concepts.
- Study the bullet points carefully and consider the full implications and scope of the requirements.
- Pay attention to the form the response should take: (a letter? a report?).
- Adopt the correct linguistic register: (formal? informal?).
- Plan carefully and stick to your plan, avoiding digressions, getting carried away, recapitulation, putting in afterthoughts, etc.
- All the bullet point must be covered and developed, but not necessarily given equal weight.
- Make sure that ideas follow a logical sequence, both overall and within each paragraph.
- Avoid generalisations. Make sure that ideas are illustrated and substantiated.
- Take care to ensure full coverage of the content within the limits of the word count.
- Develop the skill of communicating succinctly but effectively.
- Leave enough time at the end to check your writing for accuracy.

The Spanish-language requirements for all the tasks

- Remember that essential basic grammar knowledge is required. You should aim for responding in accurate language.
- Be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular.
- Be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person.
- Be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages.
- Use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (e.g. *mi* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.).
- Use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses.
- Be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (e.g. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.).
- Know when accents are important (e.g. *trabajo* or *trabajó*? *esta*, *está* or *ésta*?).
- Be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully.
- Develop a bank of suitable phrases for your essay writing: how to begin (*para empezar*), making general statements (*hablando en forma general*), giving opinions (*me parece que*), explaining (*es decir*), disagreeing (*no estoy de acuerdo con*), giving justification (*no cabe duda de que*), expanding ideas (*no sólo ... sino también*), contradicting (*a pesar de que*), suggesting (*es posible que*) and concluding (*en resumen*), etc. (Note: These are only suggestions and candidates should build up their own banks of phrases).