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Spanish (continuers)

2015 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

## School Assessment

Teachers should ensure that the performance standards included with tasks, and used to assess student work, are the current Stage 2 SACE performance standards.

Teachers are encouraged to access the SACE website and to use the support documents provided.

When teachers attach performance standards to student work, it is useful for the moderation process if they highlight the relevant grade descriptors for each task. This demonstrates how the holistic grade was determined. It is not recommended that percentage conversions are used to assign a grade.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Most folios submitted for moderation complied with the assessment format prescribed in the subject outline. It was positive to see many high-quality assessment tasks and topics that allowed students to extend themselves and demonstrate their knowledge at the highest levels of achievement. The folio comprises three assessment tasks: interaction, text production, and text analysis. Students should undertake all three assessment tasks at least once.

Interaction

An interaction is a two-way conversation that is preferably natural and unrehearsed. The less-successful responses in this task did not allow achievement at the highest level because the interactions consisted of a presentation with a few questions at the end.

The most successful responses demonstrated language proficiency and a genuine interest in the chosen topics through discussions that reflected a true conversation. Spontaneous interaction was often facilitated by the teacher asking open-ended questions and changing the direction of the conversation.

If two students (rather than a student and a teacher) are interacting and being assessed at the same time, teachers must ensure that both students are able to meet the requirements of the subject outline, including the time limit. In some instances a more able student dominated the conversation, leaving the other student struggling to converse for the required length of time.

Teachers are encouraged to check that the recording that is sent to moderation is clear and can be easily understood.

Text production

There were a variety of responses in the form of letters, emails, articles, diary entries, and blogs. The blog entries in general allowed students to provide informative responses, while diary entries sometimes limited students to personal reflections.

The more-successful responses demonstrated depth, breadth, detailed content, variety in expression, justification of opinions, and original and creative writing. Most teachers set appropriate word limits and assessment conditions that contributed to the generally high standard of the work submitted.

The most common mistakes seen in the text production tasks related to subject–verb agreement, syntax, and adjective endings. Students should focus on these areas when proofreading their work.

Text analysis

When designing all text analysis tasks, teachers should include questions that require reflection on, and interpretation of, content and textual features. Past examination papers are a good source of appropriate texts, but teachers must supplement them with questions that give students the opportunity to meet all assessment design criteria, particularly IR2. Content-based questions alone are not sufficient to allow students to perform at the highest level of achievement in this section.

Translations were also included as part of this section, and they are not a requirement of this course. It is recommended that teachers refer to the subject outline as a guide when designing assessment tasks to ensure that subject requirements are met.

For the text analysis tasks, students need to analyse sufficient text to show that they can perform at the highest level of the performance standards. Most tasks allowed for this. Teachers should ensure that the assessment design criteria, as outlined in the assessment task sheet and in the learning and assessment plan, have been assessed.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

The in-depth study is comprised of three assessment tasks: an oral presentation in Spanish, a written response in Spanish, and a reflective response in English.

The assessment description of the three in-depth study tasks should show that they differ in content, audience, and purpose.

Most students showed a good overall level of skill in Spanish in the in-depth study, particularly in conveying clear ideas in a consistent and organised manner.

Teachers are advised that just slightly adapting an English version of the facts and presenting it in Spanish may not address the specific feature IR3 (Reflection).

Moderators noted a tendency of several students to read their entire presentation in Spanish. Students may have notes for their presentation, but they should not read the script of the in-depth study presentation.

The more-successful in-depth studies included not only a vast array of information about the topic of choice using a high standard of Spanish, but also showed a sound understanding of the influence, importance, and/or nature of the topic. The best in-depth studies detailed selected aspects of the topic.

Topics for the in-depth study were varied, for example, Ecotourism in Peru, Obesity in Latin America, Los Mapuches, Las Murgas, La Cuba oculta, Grafiti en España and Mexico-Los maestros desaparecidos. It is recommended that students avoid generic, superficial treatment of well-known topics (e.g., Frida Kahlo’s biography, descriptions of La Alhambra, celebrations for Mexican Día de los Muertos) but instead focus on a selection of particularly relevant aspects (e.g., Frida Kahlo’s painful experiences, La Alhambra’s significance in Hispanic–Muslim art, the connections of Día de los Muertos to Aztec tradition). The choice of topic for the in-depth study should come from one of the two themes ‘The Spanish-speaking Communities’ or ‘The Changing World’. Therefore, topics such as ‘My Family’, which focus on the student’s personal world, are unsuitable for this assessment type.

The most successful responses showed evidence through insightful and sophisticated reflection of how the in-depth study contributed to the students’ understanding of themselves and Spanish-speaking communities.

For the English reflection, a few students wrote about the content of their research rather than reflecting on their understanding of cultures and values, learning, beliefs, and ideas and how these have changed or been enhanced through their learning. Teachers are encouraged to explicitly refer students to the assessment design criteria for this assessment type.

Some in-depth studies exceeded the word count of 600 words. This should be avoided, as the additional work is not assessed or considered at moderation.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

**Section 1: Conversation**

The oral examination of 10–15 minutes comprises a conversation and a discussion of the student’s in-depth study.

In the conversation, students converse with the examiners about their personal world. Topics covered include life, family and friends, home, local environment, school, hobbies, interests, aspirations, and travel.

Overall the responses were very good. It was encouraging for examiners that most students had been well advised on how to prepare for the examination. Most students managed the interaction well, demonstrated culturally appropriate behaviours, and used conventional greetings. As in previous years, a large proportion of students made a conscious effort to interact positively with the examiners and, when appropriate, posed their own questions to the examiners.

The more-successful responses showed evidence of preparation and confidence in the interactions. These students coped well with all of the questions, including extended questions, and provided elaboration with ease. There were some students, however, who were not fully prepared for this section of the examination. The conversation with these students was slow and did not flow smoothly. Students were also easily thrown when the questions differed even slightly from the sample questions.

It is important that students are exposed to a variety of questions and different ways of asking for the same information as part of their preparation for the assessment.

**Section 2: Discussion**

The discussion section of the oral examination relates to the in-depth study: students are required to discuss a topic that they have researched at length — one that relates to an aspect or aspects of a topic associated with ‘The Spanish-speaking Communities’ or ‘The Changing World’ themes. As part of the discussion, students may be asked questions relating to their reflective response.

A proportion of students did not bring the In-Depth Study Outline for Oral Examination form (found on the SACE website). This form is important for examiners and students as it informs the examiners about what aspects of the study topic have been researched and helps with the discussion.

Most students performed well in this section. As in previous years, the nature of the chosen topic and the approach of each student to it played a big part in each student’s success in this section.

The most successful responses demonstrated a high level of expression and accurately conveyed information. Some of the less-successful responses lacked depth of treatment of the topic.

The choice of topic is vital and the teacher must offer guidance and direction when selecting the topic, the texts, and the assessment tasks. Teachers should encourage a broader approach to research and topics as well as depth of study and understanding.

Examiners noted that most topics for discussion were varied and well planned. Depending on the topic chosen for discussion, some students may have benefited from bringing relevant support materials, such as maps, photographs, or charts.

Written Examination

Overall students performed well in the written examination. As in previous years, there were some outstanding performances and a few insufficient responses, but most students managed to successfully extract information, relate concepts, and summarise content in Spanish.

Although most students demonstrated a good understanding of texts, they did not always provide sufficient relevant evidence in their responses. Students should remember that, when requested, justifying their responses with evidence from the text is an essential part of many questions in order to obtain full marks. The best answers are generally not word for word as in the text provided, but rather they provide an appropriate response to the question, demonstrating comprehensive understanding.

**Section 1: Listening and Responding**

There were five texts in Spanish, all of them varying in length and nature. For all texts, the questions and answers were in English.

At least four questions asked about the purpose or tone of the verbal exchanges included in the texts, a task that required analysis rather than translation. As in past years, most students answered in general terms, but a minority demonstrated that they understood the specific information. More importantly the most successful responses addressed what each specific question required, and provided not only relevant supporting evidence from the texts, but also some degree of elaboration and synthesis.

Some questions required more thorough elaboration from the students; that is, a more exhaustive scanning of both the content and language features in each text. This section of the examination includes a variety of spoken texts, and teachers should ensure that students are exposed to a wide range of spoken Spanish during the teaching and learning program.

*Question 1*

(a) Most responses identified that the reason the train was cancelled was due to problems with the electrical network.

(b) The majority of responses identified that the alternatives offered were to obtain a refund, change the date of travel, or take a free bus.

*Question 2*

Some students seemed to find this question a challenge. Students should be encouraged to be specific in their responses, to ensure they answer the question that is being asked. For example, the most appropriate answer according to the text for part (a), ‘What is the reason for the phone call?’, is that Paola is calling to ask Marcelo to come to her house to drink tea and eat fried cakes. Students should be given plenty of opportunity to develop their listening comprehension and analysis skills in English and Spanish in order to achieve at the highest level.

*Question 3*

Even though the context of the telephone conversation would have been quite familiar to many of the students, it was rich in vocabulary (especially verbs), which made it quite challenging for some students.

(a) Most students were able to identify that Nelson was travelling to Australia.

(b) Successful responses identified that Nelson’s grandmother thinks the international phone calls are too expensive.

(c) In part (i) successful responses identified that Nelson decides to download an application on his grandmother’s mobile, and in part (ii) that his grandmother’s worries about cost and keeping her details private led to Nelson’s decision.

*Question 4*

This question related to another telephone conversation. The majority of responses successfully identified that the traffic was heavy, which was why Carlos was late.

*Question 5*

This question showcased one of the least-known Spanish-speaking countries in the world: Equatorial Guinea. The strong cultural component of this text successfully engaged the students’ interest.

(a) Most responses correctly identified that Equatorial Guinea is the only African country in which Spanish is an official language.

(b) Successful responses identified four appealing features for tourists, which included the buildings in Malabo, Lake Biao, and the deep, calm seas.

Generally in this section the majority of responses demonstrated high-level interpretation of the content, context, purpose, and ideas represented in the texts.

Analysing the tone, register, and linguistic features of a foreign language is one of the most difficult and challenging aspects students encounter when learning a second language. Responses generally demonstrated good interpretation of and reflection on the language used in the texts.

**Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A**

Reponses in English and Spanish

The first text of this section had a very strong cultural component, and the majority of students answered most of the questions correctly.

*Question 6*

(c) This question, ‘What gave Tracy the inspiration for EXPOMUZO?’, elicited various answers. Some responses demonstrated a lack of understanding that the main inspiration for Tracy to create EXPOMUZO was the jewel/pendant that her great-grandmother gave her as a gift.

*Question 7*

(c) Many students were able to identify three essential elements that tomatoes need in order to grow (according to the text).

(d) The text focused on the use of commands and the imperative tense in the Spanish language. Successful responses provided examples of commands used to emphasise the important points in the tomato-growing process. For example, ‘Be very careful!’, ‘Pay attention!’, and ‘Don’t forget!’.

**Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B**

Reponses in Spanish

In general the task design gave students the opportunity to do well; however, some responses did not meet the minimum word count. The less-successful responses included duplication of lengthy sections of the text. A large proportion of responses expressed interest and a real concern for current world issues (Global Citizens).

The most successful responses demonstrated original ideas and very good use of paraphrasing and imaginative writing, which created the impact and interest to engage the audience.

Some responses were too short and some did not follow the correct conjugation for *tú* and *usted*.

Some anglicised/Spanglish words were noticed with verb conjugation, for example, *jardinar*, *voluntar*, and *maesté*.

**Section 3: Writing in Spanish**

Three topics of varying nature were available for the students to choose from, and they were chosen in approximately equal numbers.

Markers were again satisfied with the overall ability of this year’s students to produce written texts, and many high marks were awarded for this section.

Responses generally met the word length requirements, but expression was variable. A few responses demonstrated a lack of control over the basic grammar of noun–adjective and verb–subject agreement.

Many responses demonstrated a good command of syntax and a sound knowledge of the conventions for each text type. Some responses showed a degree of inconsistency in register or tone. Overall there was a good capacity to convey information accurately by using different structures, such as subjunctives, comparatives, and connectors.

Common mistakes included: absence of appropriate accents and other punctuation signs, use of present continuous after a preposition, improper choice of adjective versus adverb, inappropriate verb regime, incorrect construction of ‘back-to-front’ verbs, lack of correspondence for gender or number, wrong verb ending or conjugation, improper use of Spanglish, improper choice of past tense in narrations, absence of definitive article, and incorrect choice of indicative or subjunctive.

Students are reminded to take some time to check punctuation, spelling, and syntax after completing their responses. It is also very important for students to have a basic yet solid command of the use of the subjunctive, since this conjugation is constantly needed in Spanish for the expression of ideas and opinions.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Materials provided by schools for moderation were adequately packaged and organised. However, not all schools included clearly identifiable learning and assessment plans, and the addendum (if applicable). Occasionally a school did not include all assessment tasks for moderation or provide an explanation for this absence using the Variations — Moderation Materials form. Schools are reminded to organise students’ work by assessment type.

It is essential that a copy of the learning and assessment plan be submitted with the moderation materials.

Teachers should refer to the subject minisite for information about the submission of electronic files, including appropriate file formats and labelling conventions that support student materials to be located and accessed quickly, as needed. There is no need to send in notes or drafts of in-depth study or folio pieces.

To ensure the consistency and fairness of the assessment across schools, it is essential that all student materials are easily accessible, clearly organised, and correctly labelled. Most importantly all care should be taken when recording and processing students’ grades for each particular assessment type, to prevent clerical errors. Teachers should record interactions and oral presentations on a CD or USB drive, clearly labelling each track with the student’s number.

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