

Frequently Asked Questions

AS/A Level Spanish (8665/8673/8685/9719)

Are there any changes to the syllabus?

A level Spanish

Set texts for the Texts paper (Component 4) will change every year. The list of set texts to be examined is provided in the syllabus for each year.

AS Spanish Literature

Set texts for the Texts paper (Component 4) will change every year. The list of set texts to be examined is provided in the syllabus for each year.

AS First Language Spanish

Set texts for the Texts paper (Component 4) will change every year. The list of set texts to be examined is provided in the syllabus for each year.

For full details of any changes, please consult the syllabus booklet for the relevant year.

What resources are available to support this syllabus?

The following resources are available:

- Standards Booklets for the Speaking, Reading & Writing, Essay and Texts components (provide guidance on how these components are marked and includes a cassette of marked work for Speaking).
- Student Guide to Cambridge AS/A level Languages other than English (aimed at students and teachers, this gives a general overview of the syllabus, explains what examiners are looking for and guides students on how to approach the examination).
- Past Papers.
- Mark Schemes.
- Principal Examiner Reports.
- Schemes of Work (see CIE Teacher Support website).

Why do AS/A level Languages other than English not follow the same staged assessment pattern as the other new AS/A level syllabuses?

Language learning is both linear and skills based. Experience has shown that it takes some time for students to acquire the confidence to handle AS/A level topic areas and feedback from “modular” type examinations shows that languages do not readily fit this pattern. This means that it would be inappropriate to test candidates in the early stages of their development of a particular skill area eg speaking or reading and then count that towards an A level grade without further assessment of their progress. If this was done, students would compulsorily have to take two tests in each of the skill areas which would significantly add to the burden.

What can you offer students in Languages other than English as an interim assessment of their progress?

An AS is available which could be used for different purposes: for interim assessment in Reading/Writing and Essay, and in Literature; for final assessment of students who wish to progress beyond IGCSE, but whose A levels are in other subject areas. To accommodate the fact that AS candidates are taking A level components, the grade boundaries will be set lower than for A level candidates. What this AS does not do, however, is contribute to the A level assessment.

Which combinations of qualifications are permitted within each language (other than English) at AS/A level?

Where common components contribute to different awards, candidates may not take more than one of the awards in the same examination session.

For example,

- candidates for an **Advanced Level** award in a subject may not take an **Advanced Subsidiary** award in the same language in the same session;
- candidates for **Advanced Subsidiary First Language** may not take **Advanced Subsidiary Literature** in the same language in the same session.

However, candidates may take **Advanced Subsidiary Language** and **Advanced Subsidiary Literature** in the same language in the same session.

Are students allowed to take dictionaries into the examination room?

No. Dictionaries are not permitted.

If my candidate is ungraded at A level, is there a possibility of a compensatory AS?

Yes, all candidates in this position will then be regraded as AS Spanish candidates using the components which are common to both levels and will be awarded an AS grade.

Can I teach AS and A level candidates in the same classroom?

Yes, the overlap between the components for AS and A level is such that most activities will be suitable for both groups.

When will I receive the materials for the AS/A level Speaking test?

No question paper is required. The materials for the conduct and assessment of the Speaking test are to be found in the syllabus booklet for the appropriate year. Centres must provide their own cassette on which to record the sample of candidates for moderation. CIE will provide Centres with the MS1 computer-printed mark sheet(s) in March for the June session and in October for the November session and marks can then be transferred from the working mark sheet(s).

What is the period for conducting the Speaking tests?

The Speaking test periods are as follows:

May/June session: 1 April-1 June.

November session: 15 October-15 November.

For AS/A level Speaking tests, what is the deadline for submitting cassettes, working mark sheets and MS1 mark sheets to CIE for moderation?

Mark sheets and cassettes for moderation for the AS/A level Speaking tests must arrive at CIE no later than:

7 June for the May/June session.

22 November for the November session.

Once your Centre has completed its tests, you should despatch mark sheets and cassettes for moderation as soon as possible. Please don't wait until the end of the examination period before sending us these items.

Must I be accredited by CIE before conducting and assessing the AS/A level Languages other than English Speaking test?

Accreditation from CIE is not required in order to conduct the AS/A level Languages other than English Speaking test.

Who marks the Speaking tests?

It is the responsibility of the person conducting the Speaking tests to mark them. The tests should be marked as they are being conducted. Examiners should mark the 'live' candidate and not a recording.

How should I go about choosing someone to conduct and assess the Speaking tests at my centre?

Ideally, a teacher at the school should conduct and assess the Speaking tests. Where this is not possible and it is necessary to look for someone outside the school, you should look for someone who is fluent in the language, preferably with teaching experience and with experience of conducting other oral examinations. It is important that the person appointed takes the time to familiarise him/herself with the requirements of the examination before conducting and assessing any 'live' Speaking tests. The examination syllabus contains all the information the examiner will need and should be sent to him/her to read before the day of the examination. If it is not possible to send the syllabus to the examiner beforehand, then, on the day of the examination, you should arrange for him/her to arrive at the Centre 1-2 hours before conducting and assessing the first Speaking test, in order that s/he can read through the instructions contained in the syllabus.

What happens to my (Centre's) Speaking marks when they arrive at CIE?

When your recorded sample, working mark sheet(s) and moderator copy of the MS1 mark sheet(s) arrive at CIE, they are forwarded to one of our Moderators. The Moderator listens to your sample and looks at the marks that you have awarded to ensure that they are in line with the international standard. If your marks are in line, then they will not be changed. If they are not, then an adjustment will be made to bring them into line, eg the marks will be raised if you have marked your candidates severely, or lowered if you have been too generous. A report on your conduct and assessment of the Speaking tests will be sent to your Centre with the results.

I've got a great idea for a set text I'd like to see on the syllabus, and I think it would be very popular with other teachers too. What should I do?

Please write to the Product Manager for A level Spanish. We welcome suggestions from our Centres for set texts in future sessions.

Is it a requirement to use particular editions of the set texts? Is it a problem if my candidates are studying from different editions?

If a particular edition is not specified in the syllabus booklet, students can use any edition (so long as it is the full text).

Are candidates who prepare more than the minimum required set texts at an advantage in the exam room?

Only in the sense that they potentially will have more choice of questions. In reality, demands on classroom time mean that it is unlikely that many candidates will have prepared more than 3 texts.

What do you think of the educational benefits of doing the AS Literature with students of IGCSE age?

Good idea – we have had feedback from a number of centres who feel that this is something which could be used for IGCSE First or very fluent Foreign Language students to give curriculum and cultural enrichment.