

Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2017 AP[®] Spanish Language and Culture Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	1291			
Total Group				
• Number of Students Scored	168,307			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	32,843	19.5	
	4	58,554	34.8	
	3	57,479	34.2	
	2	16,888	10.0	
	1	2,543	1.5	
• Global Mean	3.61			
Standard Group*				
• Number of Students Scored	54,839			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	8,732	15.9	
	4	17,511	31.9	
	3	19,667	35.9	
	2	7,447	13.6	
	1	1,482	2.7	
• Global Mean	3.45			

* Standard students generally receive most of their foreign language training in U.S. schools. They did not indicate on their answer sheet that they regularly speak or hear the foreign language of the exam, or that they have lived for one month or more in a country where the language is spoken.

The following comments on the 2017 free-response questions for AP[®] Spanish Language and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Jeffrey Reeder, Sonoma State University. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question #1

Task: Interpersonal Writing: Email Reply

Max. Points: 5

Topic: reply to an e-mail message about distance learning

Total Group Mean Score: 3.34

Standard Group Mean Score: 3.20

What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?

This task assessed writing in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student write a reply to an e-mail message. Students were allotted 15 minutes to read the message and write the reply. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able, first, to comprehend the e-mail, and then to write a reply using a formal form of address. The reply must address all the questions and requests raised in the message, as well as ask for more details about something mentioned in the message.

The course theme for the e-mail reply was Contemporary Life. The students were asked to write a reply in response to an e-mail message from the admissions office of Universidad de Guanacaste that was selecting students with a specific profile for the online courses offered. The original e-mail asked two questions:

1. Why is the student considering distance learning or distance education?
2. What are the difficulties that the student might encounter when taking an online course?

The students were also asked to include a greeting and a closing in their e-mail responses.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

In general, the students were able to understand the task, the requirements, and the e-mail. Students were able to answer both questions, some with elaboration and even creativity. Students were able to request for further information, directly or indirectly, about different aspects of studying online. This included schedules, cost, courses offered, availability of instructors, homework requirements, as well as the actual selection / admission process.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

The most common mistake was that students confused the idea of online courses (*educación a distancia*) to mean “studying abroad.” If that was the case, most of them were not successful in meeting the other requirements of the task, such as answering the questions and requesting more information. The use of register was also not as consistent for many students. Most responses in the mid-low range were missing the request for additional information as indicated in the general directions of the task.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students confused the idea of online courses (<i>educación a distancia</i>) to mean “studying abroad.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students correctly understood <i>educación a distancia</i> to mean online courses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inconsistent use of the formal register.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent and appropriate use of the formal register (e.g. <i>tú</i> vs. <i>usted</i> and associated) verbal paradigms, and appropriate formal greetings and closings.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

Teachers should teach their students to write e-mail messages in the formal register, and provide opportunities for them to practice this task and receive feedback on it to improve their performance.

Teachers should encourage students to read all the instructions to the task so that they are aware of all the requirements they are asked to complete. They should encourage students to consider checking off each element of the task once they have completed it.

Teachers should provide opportunities to students to practice both writing and speaking in the formal register to increase students' competency and comfort in the formal register.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Teachers should view the AP World Language and Culture Online Module on Interpersonal Writing: *Interpersonal Communication: Developing Writing Abilities*, by Nyan-Ping Bi to learn some strategies that focus on developing students' interpersonal writing skills. Teachers can access this online module here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Spanish Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-spanish-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-spanish-language-and-culture>
- Teachers should choose a sample E-mail Reply prompt from the posted free response questions from 2014-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performances to share with students so they can examine student work vis-à-vis the scoring guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task.
- Teachers should assign the other E-mail Reply prompts from 2014-2017 under the same conditions and time constraints as the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students need to do in order to move their performance to the next level.

Question #2

Task: Presentational
Writing: Persuasive Essay

Topic: Cell phone use in school

Max. Points: 5

Total Group Mean Score: 3.34
Standard Group Mean Score: 3.35

What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?

This task assessed writing in the presentational communicative mode by having the student write a persuasive essay on a given topic while referencing three sources of information about the topic. Students were first allotted 6 minutes to read the essay topic and the two printed sources. Then they listened to the one audio source twice. Afterward they had 40 minutes to write the essay. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able, first, to comprehend the three sources, and then to present their different viewpoints. They also had to present their own viewpoint and defend it thoroughly, using information from all of the sources to support the essay. As they referred to the sources, they had to identify them appropriately. Furthermore, the essay had to be organized into clear paragraphs.

The course theme for the persuasive essay task was Science and Technology, and the prompt was “Should the use of cell phones be permitted in secondary schools?”

Source 1, printed article, gave five reasons in favor of using cell phones in schools:

1. It is a tool to prepare students for their professional careers.
2. Its use can be of financial help to schools that don't have funds to purchase technology.
3. It helps teach skills for the 21st Century and argues against those that think that cell phones are tools that help students cheat.
4. It is used by adults and administrators in schools all the time (double standard).
5. It is helpful to teach students to be responsible when using technology.

Source 2 was a graph, published in 2011 in the Dominican Republic, titled: “Purposes for the Use of Cell Phones” and included data in percentages from a survey about habits and uses of technology in 618 adolescents from 12 to 18 years old.

Source 3 was an audio presentation of approximately 3 minutes in duration about the same topic, titled: “Cell phones in class: yes or no?” published in 2011 in Argentina. This source mostly contained arguments against the use of cell phones in class, although it accepted the idea of allowing them on certain occasions, with the consent of the parents.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Overall, students were able to successfully complete the task of answering the question with a personal opinion and defending that opinion by utilizing the sources provided. The majority of responses showed an understanding of what was expected of the student. Because of the familiarity that the respondents had with the topic, there was much elaboration which led to strong personal opinions. This may also be attributed to the fact that the topic is found in many text books, as well as individual teacher-created prompts. Students in the high range were able to utilize those parts of the sources that furthered their argument, as well as those who took an opposing point of view. Source 1 was very “user-friendly” in that it listed five specific reasons why cell phones should be allowed. The graph was easy to read and interpret while the recording, as is usually the case, was the most difficult.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Generally, students answered the question referring specifically to the use of cell phones in class, rather than in secondary school in general. This may be due to the fact that source 3 (recording) was titled “Celulares en clase, ¿sí o no?” Some students wrote about the use of cell phones in school based entirely on their own experiences and observations without using sources to defend their arguments, while others wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of cell phones in general, which was not the question. Many samples referenced one or two percentage figures from Source 2 and few utilized the overall result of the survey to support the argument that cell phones are primarily used for non-academic purposes. Very few responses mentioned Source 3 which spoke about the position on the part of school officials as to whether to allow the cell phones in school. This source was primarily interpreted as cell phones being a distraction, which served to refute the argument for their use, as well as to advance the stand against it.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students referred to the use of cell phones in class, rather than in school in general.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students correctly understood that the prompt asked them to write about cell phone use in school in general.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students wrote about their personal viewpoints exclusively, instead of using the sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students included information from all three sources to support their essay.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

Teachers should stress that students should carefully read the question first and then, after reading/listening to the three sources, clearly state their own viewpoint. Teachers should specify that students must reference all the sources in the essay. Students need to understand that they must be thorough when obtaining information from the sources to support their viewpoint, in other words, they should get more than one idea per source so that they can develop and can integrate more information from each into their argument. The connection of ideas is part of the integration. Therefore, teachers should train their students to develop a thesis and to use sources as appropriate, to support this thesis, rather than to simply structure the essay according to the order of the sources. Students should practice organizing a persuasive essay, as well as how to cite sources properly. Teachers should encourage students to make effective transitions in their essays and have students use appropriate transitional expressions and cohesive devices.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Teachers should view the two AP World Language and Culture Online Module on Presentational Writing(Presentational Communication, A Focus on Writing, by Federica Santini, and Building Students’ Skills in Developing Effective Arguments, by Ann Mar) to learn strategies that focus on developing students’ presentational writing skills. Teachers can access these two online modules here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Spanish Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-spanish-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-spanish-language-and-culture>

- Teachers should choose a sample Persuasive Essay prompt from the posted free response questions from 2014-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performances to share with students so they can examine student work vis-à-vis the scoring guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task.
- Teachers should assign the other Persuasive Essay prompts from 2014-2017 under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next level.

Question #3**Task:** Interpersonal
Speaking: Conversation**Topic:** Creating a community website**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 4.12**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.34***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed speaking in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student respond as part of a simulated oral conversation. Students were first allotted 1 minute to read a preview of the conversation, including an outline of each turn in the conversation. Then the conversation proceeded, including 20 seconds for students to speak at each of five turns in the conversation. The series of five responses received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The responses had to appropriately address each turn in the conversation, according to the outline as well as the simulated interlocutor's utterance.

The course theme for the conversation task was Families and Communities. The student maintained a simulated conversation during class time with a classmate named Juan about a school project involving the creation of a website dedicated to featuring the community where they both live.

1. In the first prompt Juan asks the student to propose ideas about things or places they could photograph for a website about the community where they live. The student was expected to answer and give several options.
2. The second prompt asks the student what they would like to see on the homepage of the website. The student was required to respond and explain why.
3. In the third prompt Juan asks the student what other information they could post on the website, in addition to the photos. The student was expected to answer and provide details.
4. For the fourth prompt Juan suggests adding testimonials to the website and asked the student who they would like to interview for this section. The student was expected to answer with details.
5. In the final prompt Juan mentions that the class was coming to an end and then he asks when they could meet again to work on the project. The student was expected to suggest an option and say goodbye.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Most students found the question accessible and they provided a variety of answers with different degrees of appropriateness in terms of relevant content, amount of information, elaboration, linguistic accuracy and variety. Some students were able to provide somewhat appropriate responses by using basic vocabulary (fotos, sitio web, comunidad, proyecto, personas) and grammatical structures (podemos hacer, necesitamos tener). Other students offered higher-level grammar and richer vocabulary to construct more elaborate and appropriate responses in the good and strong evaluation categories.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Students in the higher performance ranges used more varied vocabulary (e.g. rich descriptions of specific places and reasons why they would be good options for photos, different types of information that one would like to find on a website and why, categories and descriptions of individuals who could provide testimonials, etc.). They also demonstrated good control of syntactic structures that allowed them to elaborate beyond giving mere lists of places, people or meeting times.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in the lower performance ranges had limited vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many students had a wide range of appropriate vocabulary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were unable to elaborate or connect their responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students demonstrated good control of syntactic structures that allowed them to elaborate beyond giving mere lists of places, people or meeting times.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

Students could be taught strategies for successful elaboration, including the use of transitional words and connectors (mientras que..., pero por otro lado...), relative pronouns (las fotos de las que te hablo, un lugar por el que pasa mucha gente), and opinions and recommendations in different formats (podríamos..., recomiendo que pongamos..., es mejor que entrevistemos a..., me parece que deberíamos...). Students should be provided with opportunities to converse spontaneously in order to develop their abilities to successfully engage in spoken interpersonal communication.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Teachers should view the AP World Language and Culture Online Module on interpersonal speaking: *Interpersonal Communication: Developing Speaking Abilities*, by Clarissa Adams-Fletcher to learn some strategies that focus on developing students' interpersonal speaking skills. Teachers can access this online module here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Spanish Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-spanish-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-spanish-language-and-culture>
- Teachers should choose a sample Conversation prompt from the posted free response questions from 2014-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performances to share with students so that they can examine student work vis-à-vis the scoring guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-spanish-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-spanish-language-and-culture>
- Teachers should assign the other Conversation prompts from 2014-2017 under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next level.

Question #4

Task: Presentational Speaking: Cultural Comparison

Max. Points: 5

Topic: The importance of the media in the development of personal image in two communities

Total Group Mean Score: 2.23

Standard Group Mean Score: 2.58

What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?

This task assessed speaking in the presentational communicative mode by having the student make a comparative oral presentation on a cultural topic. Students were allotted 4 minutes to read the topic and prepare the presentation, and then 2 minutes to deliver the presentation. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The presentation had to compare the student's own community to an area of the Spanish-speaking world, demonstrating understanding of cultural features of the Spanish-speaking world. Furthermore, the presentation had to be organized clearly.

The course theme for the cultural comparison task was Personal and Public Identities and the prompt asked students to speak to the importance of media in the development of personal image: *¿Cuál es la importancia de los medios de comunicación en el desarrollo de la imagen personal para las personas de tu comunidad?*

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

This year, students developed this presentation in a variety of ways; the use of media to develop personal image through social media, food, music and personal relationships are some examples. Many students provided supporting details and relevant examples while others simply provided a few supporting details without full elaboration and connection of both parts of the prompt. Lastly, many students perceived the term "*medios de comunicación*" as modes/means of communication and not as media.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Some students interpreted "*medios de comunicación*" as simply communication with others and gave cultural presentations on the importance of speaking two languages, in this case English and Spanish. Some students simply read the second part of the prompt and provided a cultural presentation of their choosing, completely off topic and irrelevant to the task. "*Compara tus observaciones acerca de las comunidades en las que has vivido con tus observaciones de una región del mundo hispanohablante que te sea familiar. En tu presentación, puedes referirte a lo que has estudiado, vivido, observado, etc.*"

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some students interpreted "<i>medios de comunicación</i>" as simply communication with others (not 'media').	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students who understood the task and prompt were successful, able to engage fully, and provide an appropriate response on the relative importance of the media in developing personal image in their own community and in a target Spanish-speaking community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some students gave presentations on a topic of their own choosing, and did not respond to the prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Successful responses made effective comparisons and provided supporting details and relevant examples from each of the two communities.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

Teachers should provide students effective strategies for making cultural comparisons. Students should be taught to address the task prompt clearly and specifically. They should practice giving organized oral presentations using transitional expressions and cohesive devices in order to organize and connect their ideas. Teachers should develop and emphasize students' control of grammar so that students will communicate effectively and appropriately. From the beginning of language study, teachers should ensure that students acquired varied and appropriate vocabulary.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Teachers should view the AP World Language and Culture Online Module on presentational speaking, *Presentational Communication: A Focus on Speaking* by Angelika Becker, to learn some strategies that focus on developing students' presentational speaking skills. Teachers can access this online module here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Spanish Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-spanish-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-spanish-language-and-culture>
- Teachers should choose a sample Cultural Comparison prompt from the posted free response questions from 2014-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performances to share with students so they can examine student work vis-à-vis the scoring guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-spanish-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-spanish-language-and-culture>
- Teachers should assign the other Cultural Comparison prompts from 2014-2017 under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next level.