

The Spanish History test for university entry: Analysis and comparison among autonomous regions¹

La prueba de Historia de España para acceder a la universidad: análisis y comparación entre comunidades autónomas

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Abstract:

The university entry procedure is a critical aspect for students gaining entry to higher education. This work has a dual purpose: to analyse the structure of the Spanish History test for university entry, according to the autonomous region in which it is designed, and to study the relationship between the differences observed in the structure and average performance obtained by students. A comparative analysis has been carried out with a methodological approach of rational analysis of documentary evidence with sixty-eight exams from 2019, adapting the approach proposed by García-Garrido (1991). Likewise, a secondary analysis has been conducted of the data published annually by the Integrated University

Information System. The results show substantial differences in the assessment of national historical knowledge: in the structure and content, in the cognitive level and in the marks. Disparities are specifically observed in the language of the test, in the optional nature, in the number of questions and in the content blocks that are assessed: in Catalonia, Valencia and the Basque Country, neither Ancient History nor the Middle Ages, nor the Modern Era are assessed. Likewise, the Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha and Castile and León demand a higher cognitive level from their students. These aspects determine the heterogeneity in the constructs used, in such a way that neither the same understanding nor the same skills of

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national historical knowledge are being measured throughout the autonomous regions.

Keywords: historical knowledge; external tests; external assessment; university entry; Spanish History.

Resumen:

El procedimiento de ingreso a la universidad es un aspecto crítico para los estudiantes que pretenden cursar enseñanzas superiores universitarias. El presente trabajo tiene una doble finalidad: examinar la estructura de la prueba de Historia de España para acceder a la universidad en cada comunidad autónoma y estudiar la relación entre las diferencias observadas en tales diseños y el rendimiento promedio obtenido por los estudiantes. Para ello, se ha llevado a cabo un análisis comparativo de sesenta y ocho exámenes de 2019, con un enfoque metodológico de análisis racional de evidencia documental basado en García-Garrido (1991). Asimismo, se ha realizado un análisis

secundario de los datos publicados anualmente por el Sistema Integrado de Información Universitaria. Los resultados muestran diferencias sustanciales en la evaluación del saber histórico nacional: en la estructura y en los contenidos, en el nivel cognitivo y en las puntuaciones. En concreto, se observan disparidades en la lengua de la prueba, en la optatividad, en el número de preguntas o en los bloques de contenidos que se evalúan. Por ejemplo, en Cataluña, Valencia y País Vasco, no se evalúan la Edad Antigua, la Edad Media ni la Edad Moderna. Asimismo, Baleares, Canarias, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha y Castilla y León exigen un mayor nivel cognitivo a sus estudiantes. Estos aspectos determinan la heterogeneidad en los constructos utilizados, de manera que no se están midiendo los mismos conocimientos ni las mismas habilidades del saber histórico nacional en todas las comunidades autónomas.

Descriptor: conocimiento histórico, pruebas externas, evaluación externa, acceso a la universidad, Historia de España.

1. Introduction

University entry in Spain has found itself in a transition period since the University Entrance Exam (EvAU in Spanish) was implemented in the 2016-2017 academic year. Just like PISA, it incorporates assessable learning standards as a benchmark in verifying the degree of skill acquisition (Fuster, 2015; Sánchez, 2018). In the 2022-2023 academic year, the Draft royal decree regulating the basic characteristics of the university entrance exam and stating the calculation procedure for entry marks was

announced. It owes its development to the changes introduced by Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, amending Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, in order to deal with the challenges posed by the European Union and UNESCO in Agenda 2030. Furthermore, on 14 March 2023, a pilot University Entrance Exam was carried out, governed by article 38 of the aforementioned law, in fifty schools in ten autonomous regions and in Ceuta and Melilla, so as to align them with the competence nature of the new curriculum.

In view of the lack of research on university entrance exams and, more specifically, considering the absence of external tools in Spain that measure the degree of historical competence acquisition, many authors indicate the need to conduct research on the aforementioned (Fuster, 2015; García-Laborda, 2012; Lorenzo et al., 2014; Nieto-Isidro et al., 2020; Ruiz-Hidalgo et al., 2019; Ruiz-Lázaro & González, 2017; Ruiz-Lázaro et al., 2021; Ruiz-Lázaro, 2022; Sáiz & Fuster, 2014; Souto et al., 2014; Veas et al., 2020). This study, therefore, deals with the Spanish History test of the EvAU, which will make it possible to demonstrate what the current tests are like and whether the proposed changes reinforce or contradict the aspects identified in the comparative analysis of autonomous regions.

1.1. Development of historical thinking in the learning of Spanish history

The education model that has been predominant for many years in schools, particularly in history teaching (Álvarez, 2020), has been the traditional one. It is characterised by an approach focused and centred on teachers, who pass on information to students while the latter are passive receivers of knowledge (Galván-Cardoso & Siano-Ramos, 2021; Espíndola & Macías, 2021). Authors such as Cortes et al. (2019) and Sepúlveda (2020) state that constructivist teaching approaches must be incorporated in order to develop historical thinking in student learning. In this respect, according to Lévesque and Zanazanian (2015) and Sáiz et al. (2018), teachers must be capable of changing the traditional approach of history teaching through the implementation of other methodological approaches, in order for historical thinking to be the new great aim

of modernizing history teaching. Historical thinking refers to the ability to understand, analyse and interpret the past and present by means of analysing evidence, processing events and phenomena, historical understanding and interpretations, and the creation of coherent historical narratives (Lee, 2005). These strategies allow students to develop cognitive and metacognitive skills, as well as a better understanding of Spanish history and its teaching objectives: (a) understand the past, evolution, periods in history, people and events that have influenced political, economic, social and cultural changes; (b) develop critical and analytical thinking of students; and (c) promote historical awareness and national identity while understanding that the past has an influence and impact on the present and considering the variety of experiences that consolidate reality in Spain (João & Gomes, 2019; Marín-Cepeda & Fontal, 2020; Martínez & Rodríguez, 2015).

In this regard, the assessment of Spanish history and, therefore, of historical thinking, should be in accordance with the type of teaching received during the teaching-learning process. The Spanish History tests for university entry should be designed in such a way that they assess the extent to which the education objectives set out are achieved. That is, the questions should assess, on the one hand, the historical knowledge acquired and, on the other hand, the critical thinking skills and historical analysis of students.

1.2. National and regional historical literacy in student learning

From the very beginning, history learning in the academic field has been under-

stood as a memorisation process characterised by knowing and remembering historical information (Domínguez, 2015; Freire et al., 2020; Sáiz & Fuster, 2014). In the 19th century, history teaching as a scientific discipline was shaped as a national subject in order to form national, social, cultural and political identities in Spain (Gómez-Carrasco & Molina-Puche, 2017). However, political nationalisms (Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician) put history at the centre of their respective arguments (Gómez-Carrasco & Molina-Puche, 2017; Molina-Puche et al., 2017). By adding material specific to each autonomous region in the teaching of Spanish history, as stated in the 1978 Constitution of Spain, territorial disputes were brought about by the transmission of a common past to shape regional or nationalist identities, behaviour and ideologies (Molina-Puche et al., 2017). This may give rise to differences in the teaching of Spanish History and, therefore, in its assessment according to the different autonomous regions.

Furthermore, the traditional way of teaching has been questioned by many researchers (Gómez & Miralles, 2015; Domínguez, 2015), who support the inclusion of the use of skills in the teaching-learning process following the incorporation of the competence concept in the 21st century (Molina & Egea, 2018; Pantoja, 2017). These skills make it possible to bring together knowledge of the events that formed the ideals of each nation-state (Pérez-Garzón, 2008). Accessing, understanding and explaining the past show students the various perspectives of the past, allowing them to understand the complex and multicultural context in which we live and improving their critical thinking.

All this leads to the development of historical thinking (Molina-Puche et al., 2017).

Authors such as Sáiz and Fuster (2014) state that the acquisition of historical literacy will depend on the regularity and complexity of the level of work with historical sources in classrooms throughout the stage of secondary education. It would therefore be useful if the Spanish History test were to assess the acquisition of those skills and competence among all applicants in Spain (Fuster, 2015; 2016) and analyse whether national or regional behaviour is present, given the interest aroused by these subjects linked to the construction of collective identities.

1.3. Spanish History: from the Baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*) curriculum to the university entrance exam

The intention of the Baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*) curriculum regulating the content of the Spanish History test is to guarantee the development of knowledge, abilities and intellectual techniques which are appropriate and sufficient for entry to higher education after having acquired the skill of historical thinking (Fuster, 2016; Lorenzo et al., 2014; Royal Decree 1105/2014). Likewise, the importance of offering students an overall view is stressed, as well as the various territories that currently make up our country, since Spain is characterised by its internal diversity and its belonging to the European and Ibero-American scope. In this respect, the subject considers the historical processes of both shared and distinguishing processes in order to recognise the diversity of Spain and raise awareness in society of the present and its problems (Royal Decree 1105/2014).

TABLE 1. Assessable content of the Spanish History subject in 2nd year of Baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*).

Modules	Content blocks established in the curriculum	Group in the EvAU
Module I. The beginning of our history (from the first humans to the Visigothic monarchy)	Block 0. How History is written. Common criteria	In practice, work is carried out with the other blocks
	Block 1. The Iberian peninsula from the first humans to the disappearance of the Visigothic monarchy (711)	Content group I 20%
Module II. Middle Ages (from the Muslim conquest of the Iberian peninsula)	Block 2. The Middle Ages: Three cultures and an ever-changing political map (711-1474)	
Module III. Modern Era (until the eve of the French Revolution)	Block 3. Formation of the Hispanic monarchy and its global expansion (1474-1700)	Content group II 20%
	Block 4. Spain in the French zone of influence: reformism of the first Bourbons (1700-1788)	
Module IV. Late Modern Period	Block 5. The crisis of the Ancien Régime (1788-1833): liberalism opposite absolutism	Content group III 25%
	Block 6. The controversial construction of the liberal State (1833-1874)	
	Block 7. The Bourbon Restoration: implementation and strengthening of a new political system (1874-1902)	
	Block 8. Economic sustainability and transformations in the 19th century: inadequate development	Content group IV 20%
	Block 9. The crisis of the Restoration system and the fall of the monarchy (1902-1931)	
Block 10. The Second Republic. The Civil War in a context of international crisis (1931-1939)	Content group V 15%	
Block 11. The Franco dictatorship (1939-1975)		
	Block 12. Democratic normalization of Spain and integration in Europe (since 1975)	

In this context, in the distribution of chronological content of the subject determined by the curriculum of this stage (Table 1), more importance is given to the knowledge of contemporary history, without therefore renouncing the content referring to previous stages, since to a great extent, the diversity of Spain today can only be understood if we go back to processes and events that have taken place in the distant past (Royal Decree 1105/2014).

Until new regulations are established resulting from the social and political pact concerning education, the test taken shall have similar characteristics to the one in force until now (Royal Decree-Law 5/2016). Educational Administrations, together with public universities, therefore, continue to take on the task of designing the test and adapting its content to that of the second year of Baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*) (Royal Decree-Law 5/2016; Order of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport/1941/2016). Accordingly, the Spanish History test should assess the maturity of applicants by means of the aforementioned content blocks, which result in assessable learning standards.

Furthermore, the existence of a binding framework to form tests has been established so as to be used as a hub between the content of 2nd year of Baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*) and the content to be assessed in the aforementioned test (Royal Decree 310/2016). This framework shall consider, inter alia, the length, typology of questions and the specification matrix. The last of these establishes the precision of assessable learning standards associated with each of the content blocks, which will give shape to the assessment process by stating an illustrative percentage

or weight (Order of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport/1941/2016).

The key role played by the Spanish History test of the university entrance exam in the academic development of applicants who wish to gain entry to higher education means it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of the assessable content, the cognitive level required by the test, the format of the items that make it up and its adaptation to the right historical literacy of the student.

With this reality in mind, this work has a dual purpose.

On the one hand, to analyse the structure of the Spanish History test of the university entrance exam, EvAU, in each autonomous region. The specific objectives are as follows:

- Examine the structure of tests based on language, formulation (verbal language vs verbal and graphic language), optional nature, number of items and substantive historical content blocks which are assessed in each autonomous region .
- Analyse the cognitive level required by the items that make up the construct under consideration based on the type of tasks required.
- Compare the correction criteria used by the examining boards of each autonomous region to assess its students.
- Analyse the level of complexity of the tests.

Furthermore, this work aims to analyse the relationship between the structure of

Spanish History tests for university entry in Spain and the average performance obtained by students in the aforementioned.

2. Methodology

In response to the first research objective, a comparative analysis has been carried out with a methodological approach of rational analysis of documentary evidence found in the content of the various Spanish History tests for university entry according to the autonomous region in which they are designed. This makes it possible to demonstrate the possible reasons for the differences among the tests designed in the seventeen autonomous regions.

In order to achieve each specific objective, the structure of the tests has been studied in all seventeen autonomous regions by conducting descriptive-analytical analysis of sixty-eight exams for the first and second sitting, option

A and B, in 2019. A comparative methodology has been used, in which the approach proposed by García-Garrido (1991) is adapted. The two main stages established by this author are: the analytical (or descriptive) phase and the synthetic (or comparative) phase.

- In the descriptive phase, the legislation (Ministry of Education) and Spanish History tests (universities) applied in 2019 were gathered, in both first and second sittings, by autonomous region.
- In the comparative phase, three levels of precision were previously set out for systematic analysis of the information in accordance with the model established by Caballero et al. (2016) for comparative analysis among the various study objectives: dimension-parameter-indicator (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Comparison unit system.

Dimension	Parameter	Indicator
Overall structure	Ancient and medieval history (blocks 1 and 2)	Language Formulation Optional nature No. of items Type of task to be carried out Cognitive level
	Modern history (blocks 3 and 4)	
	Contemporary history 19 th century (blocks 5, 6, 7 and 8)	
	Contemporary history 20 th century (1902-1939) (blocks 9 and 10)	
	Contemporary history 20 th century (1939-present) (blocks 11 and 12)	
Assessment	Weighting (%) of each content block as regards the overall marks	Marks given to each content group out of the total (out of 10 points) Formal aspects assessed % Ancient and medieval history % Modern history % Contemporary history 19 th century % Contemporary history 20 th century

An ad hoc registration model has been designed to juxtapose and organise data, which were coded and categorized using the ATLAS.ti 8.0 program. This analysis has been conducted by the authors of this study, who have coded and categorized the information. Categories are inductive, as, even though the comparison unit system was defined beforehand, the categories were not established before data collection, rather they were the result of an inductive analysis of the official documents and tests examined. After reviewing and comparing these materials, common patterns, themes and characteristics has been identified, giving rise to the formulation of specific categories. This comparison has made it possible for the level of complexity of the tests to be analysed.

The second research objective, to establish a possible relationship between the differences observed in design of the tests and average performance obtained by students has been conceived as a secondary research. To this end, the data published annually by the Integrated University Information System have been analysed using a quantitative methodological approach.

3. Results

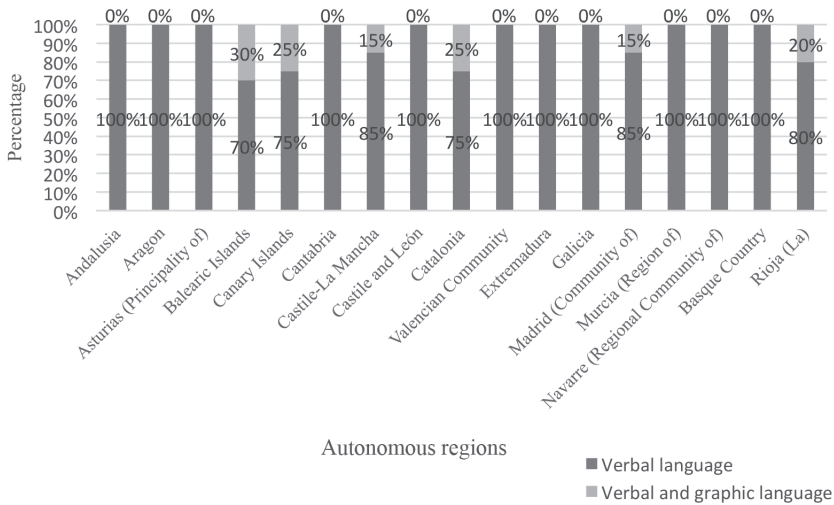
3.1. Results based on the structure and substantive historical content of the test

First of all, the results are presented in groups based on their time period or content groups: ancient (blocks 1 and 2) and medieval history (blocks 3 and 4), modern history (blocks 5, 6, 7 and 8) and the Late Modern Period (blocks 9, 10, 11 and 12).

For each content group, the following units of analysis has been studied: language, formulation (verbal, verbal and graphic), optional nature, sitting, option (A or B), number of items and historical content blocks assessed.

- Language: Spain is known for being a multilingual country within the European territory. Furthermore, even though the common official language of the State is Spanish, the autonomous regions of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands do not offer the test in this idiom, while Valencia and Galicia make it available in both languages and the rest provide it in Spanish.
- Formulation: as regards the formulation of items, verbal and written language predominates over verbal and graphic language (figures, images and tables). In particular, 96% of all items are formulated with verbal and written language, while 4% are set out using graphic language. The latter type of language is only used in tests designed in the autonomous regions of the Balearic Islands (30%), Canary Islands (25%), Castile-La Mancha (15%), Catalonia (25%), Madrid (15%) and La Rioja (20%) (Figure 1).
- Optional nature: as regards the choices offered in each test, it should be noted that there are two options (A and B), from which students choose one, with the exception of the autonomous region of Cantabria, where only one is made available. Furthermore, some tests, in turn, provide options between some items, as it happens in ten autonomous regions: Aragon, Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Castile-La

FIGURE 1. Representation of the language formulation of items. 2019.



Mancha, Castile and León, Catalonia, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid and Murcia.

- Number of items: the number of questions or tasks required is different according to the autonomous region in which the test is designed. The test

designed in the Basque Country mainly focuses on asking questions about a text, while the one designed in Madrid, as well as asking questions on different time periods, includes an image or text, in addition to a theme to be broadly developed.

FIGURE 2. Example of the test structure in the Basque Country and Madrid. 2019

CUESTIONES:

1. Los pueblos prerromanos. Las colonizaciones históricas: fenicios y griegos. Tartessos.
2. Al Andalus: economía, sociedad y cultura.
3. Los reinos cristianos en la Edad Media: organización política, régimen señorial y sociedad estamental.
4. El significado de 1492. La guerra de Granada y el descubrimiento de América.
5. Los Austrias del siglo XVII: el gobierno de valdinos. La crisis de 1640.
6. La Guerra de Sucesión Española y el sistema de Utrecht. Los Pactos de Familia.

FUENTE:

Relacione esta fotografía con la integración de España en Europa.



Felipe González firma el Tratado de Adhesión a la CEE el 12 de junio de 1985.

TEMA:

El problema de Cuba y la guerra entre España y Estados Unidos. La crisis de 1898 y sus consecuencias económicas, políticas e ideológicas.

BAREMO DEL EXAMEN

1. Describa el tipo de fuentes utilizadas (1 punto).
2. Identifique las ideas principales de los textos, situándolas en su contexto histórico y en el bloque temático correspondiente (2,5 puntos).
3. Explique, a grandes rasgos, el significado de los conceptos "sufragio censatario" y "caciquismo" (2 puntos).
4. a) Exponga las principales características del régimen político de la Restauración borbónica. Utilice para ello los textos propuestos (2,5 puntos). b) Explique brevemente los rasgos políticos del moderantismo, comparándolos con los cambios introducidos por la Revolución de 1868. (2 puntos).

PRIMERA OPCIÓN

Documento 1

"Don Alfonso XII, por la gracia de Dios, Rey constitucional de España. Á todos los que las presentes vieren y entendieren, sabed: que las Cortes han decretado y Nos sancionado lo siguiente (...) TÍTULO III. DE LOS ELECTORES Y DEL CENSO ELECTORAL CAPITULO PRIMERO. De los electores.

Artículo 14. Sólo tendrán derecho á votar en la elección de Diputados á Cortes los que estuvieren inscritos como electores en las listas del Censo electoral vigentes al tiempo de hacerse la elección.

Artículo 15. Tendrá derecho á ser inscrito como elector en las listas del Censo electoral de la sección de su respectivo domicilio todo español de edad de 25 años cumplidos que sea contribuyente dentro ó fuera del mismo distrito, por la cuota mínima para el Tesoro de 25 pesetas anuales por contribución territorial ó de 50 por subsidio industrial.

Para adquirir el derecho electoral ha de pagarse la contribución territorial con un año de antelación, y el subsidio industrial con dos años (...)."

Ley electoral, 28 de diciembre de 1878.

Documento 2

"Mientras la política no sea algo más sereno de lo que es hoy, mientras el sufragio universal no sea más que una especie de maniquí de los partidos y éstos no tengan que contar más que con los ministros de la Gobernación y los alcaldes de montañita, no hay solución, porque, apartado de la vida activa de la política el elemento neutro, los partidos necesitan para alcanzar el poder y para sostenerse en él todos esos organismos que apenas si bastan para calmar esta fiebre de la empleomanía, rayana en el delirio que se ha apoderado de la sociedad española (...)"

Diario *El siglo futuro*, viernes, 8 de enero de 1892.

ISSUES:

1. Pre-Roman towns. Historical colonizations: Phoenicians and Greeks. Tartessus.
2. Al-Andalus: economy, society and culture.
3. Christian kingdoms in the Middle Ages: political organisation, seigniorial system and class society.
4. The significance of 1492. The Granada War and the Discovery of America.
5. The Habsburgs of the 17th Century: government of the favourites. The 1640 crisis.
6. War of the Spanish Succession and the Treaty of Utrecht. The Pactes de Famille.

SOURCE:

Link this photograph to Spain becoming a member of the European Community. Felipe González signs the Treaty of Accession to the EEC on 12 June 1985.

THEME:

The issue of Cuba and the Spanish-American War. The 1898 crisis and its economic, political and ideological consequences.

SCALE OF THE EXAM

1. Describe the type of sources used (1 point).
2. Identify the main ideas of the texts, placing them in their historical context and grouping them by the appropriate theme (2.5 points).
3. Explain, in general terms, the meaning of the concepts “census suffrage” and “despotism” (2 points).
4. a) Set out the main characteristics of the political system of the Bourbon Restoration. Use the proposed texts to do so (2.5 points). b) Briefly explain the political traits of modernism, comparing them with the changes introduced by the 1868 Revolution (2 points).

FIRST OPTION

Document 1

“Mr Alfonso XII, by the grace of God, constitutional King of Spain. To all those who hereby see and understand, let it be known: that the Courts have delivered a judgment and sanctioned Us the following (...) **HEADING III. ON THE ELECTORS AND ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL SECTION ONE.** On the electors.

Article 14. Only persons registered as electors in the electoral rolls in force at the time at which the election is held shall have the right to vote in the election of Members of the Cortes. Article 15. All Spanish males who are at least 25 years old, who pay taxes in or outside of the same district shall have the right to vote as an elector in the electoral rolls of the section of his respective residence, for the minimum fee for the Treasury of 25 pesetas per year by way of territorial tax or 50 pesetas by way of industrial subsidy.

In order to acquire the right to vote, the territorial tax must be paid at least one year in advance, and the industrial subsidy at least two years in advance (...).
Electoral Law, 28 December 1878.

Document 2

“As long as politics is not more serious than what it is today, as long as universal suffrage is nothing more than a kind of mannequin for parties and the aforementioned must only count on the Governing ministers and rural mayors, there is no solution, because, as the neutral factor is far from the active life of politics, in order to achieve power and maintain themselves in it, the parties need those bodies that are barely capable of calming this fever of embleomania, bordering on delirium which has been seized from Spanish society (...).”
Newspaper *El siglo futuro*, Friday 8 January 1892.

Note: This is the translation of the texts of the images.

On the left, the test designed in the Basque Country. On the right, the test designed in the Community of Madrid.

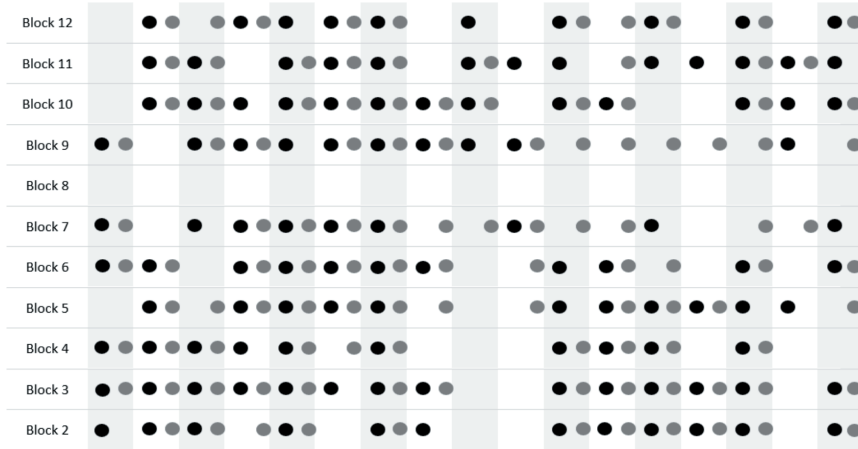
- Substantive historical content blocks: it must be noted that the autonomous regions of Catalonia, Valencia and the Basque Country only assess content blocks relating to contemporary history. In other words, they set aside the Ancient, Middle

and Modern Ages blocks, which must be assessed according to the regulations in force governing the characteristics of university entrance exams. By contrast, the autonomous region of Castile and León is the only one that assesses all content blocks. It

is noteworthy that no autonomous region assesses the block 8 content on economic sustainability and transformations in the

19th century. The blocks assessed by each autonomous region in first and second sittings in 2019 can be seen in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3. Content blocks assessed by autonomous region. 2019.



Note: 1, first sitting; 2, second sitting.

3.2. Results based on strategic content or cognitive level of the test

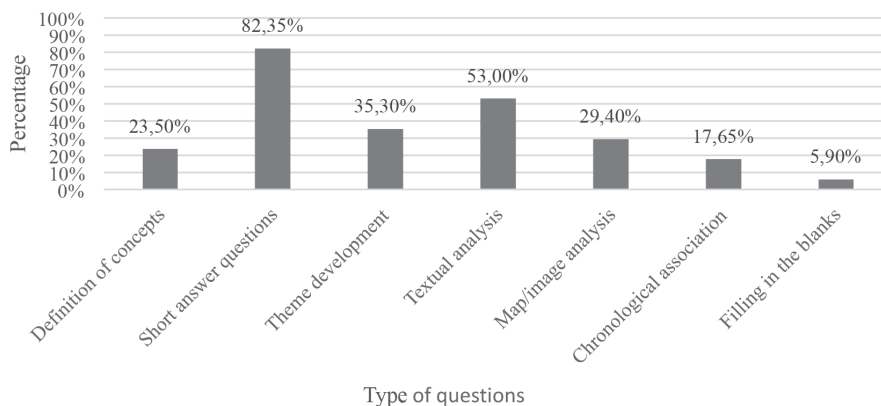
Secondly, the strategic content assessed by the tests of each autonomous region (that is, how the content is assessed) has been studied. In this respect, the following units of analysis are considered: type of task, goal and cognitive process.

- Type of task: varies depending on the autonomous region in which it is designed.
 - Definition of concepts. Cantabria, Castile and León, Valencia and Galicia ask for the definition of independent concepts in their tests.
 - Short answer questions. This is the most commonly requested task: fourteen autonomous regions design their

History tests to ask students short answer questions. These are open-ended questions, with the exception of Andalusia, where semi-open questions are also designed, accounting for a total value of 2.25 points. These are not included in the autonomous regions of Valencia, Murcia or the Basque Country.

- Theme development. Six autonomous regions measure the ability of applicants to develop a broad theme, generally relating to the 19th or 20th century. These autonomous regions are: Andalusia, Aragon, the Basque Country, Extremadura, Madrid and Murcia. Their total value is different: from 3 points in Extremadura to 3.5 points in Aragon and Murcia, 4.5 in Madrid, 5 in the Basque Country and 5.5 in Andalusia.

FIGURE 4. Frequency of appearance of the various tasks required in Spanish History tests. 2019.



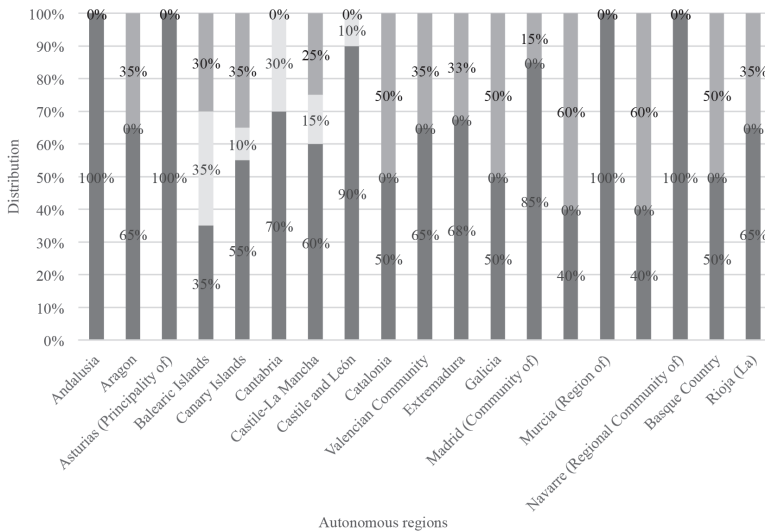
- Textual analysis. Nine autonomous regions include a text. The following abilities stand out from those measured: text localization (type of text, author, target readers, period), analysis of the aforementioned highlighting the main ideas, contextualization and significance of the historical period. The value assigned to this type of task yet again depends on the autonomous region in which the test is designed: from 1.5 points in La Rioja to 2 points in the Canary Islands, 2.5 in Castile-La Mancha, 3 in the Balearic Islands, 3.25 in Extremadura, 3.5 in Aragon and 5 in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia.
- Map/image analysis. There are only five autonomous regions that assess the ability of students to observe and connect a map or image with its context. The value of this task accounts for 1.5 points in the Canary Islands and Madrid, 2 in La Rioja, 3 in the Balearic Islands and 5 in Catalonia.
- Chronological association. There are only three autonomous regions that assess the ability of applicants to associate different events with their appropriate historical period, as well as to put them in chronological order. The value of this task accounts for 1 point in the Canary Islands and Castile and León, and 1.5 in Castile-La Mancha.
- Filling in the blanks. Murcia is the sole autonomous region that assesses the ability to complete statements by filling in the blanks. This question accounts for a total value of 0.5 points.
- Cognitive level according to the cognitive process demanded. A hierarchical order has been established from lowest to highest cognitive complexity in three groups: (1) memory-type demands, (2) comprehensive-type demands and (3) application demands.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the type of cognitive level demanded by each autonomous region. Most autonomous

regions assess memory knowledge to a greater extent. In fact, the Spanish History tests designed in Andalusia, Asturias, Murcia and Navarre only assess this type

of content. Madrid and Murcia stand out, since the cognitive level demanded from applicants is different depending on the test option chosen (model A and model B).

FIGURE 5. Distribution of the cognitive level required in the Spanish History test by autonomous region. 2019.



3.3. Results based on the assessment criteria of the test

Thirdly, the assessment criteria of the tests have been analysed according to autonomous region. On the one hand, the weighting of each content block as regards the total and, on the other hand, the formal aspects assessed in each one of tests is analysed.

In this respect, Figure 6 shows the distribution, in percentage terms, of each content group as regards the overall marks. The content group that carries the most weight in the majority of autonomous regions is contemporary history (19th and 20th centuries).

As stated in Table 1, and according to the weight determined in the specification matrix

in accordance with Order of the Ministry for Presidency, Parliamentary Relationships and Equality/12/2019 and Royal Decree 310/2016:

- “Content group I: ancient and medieval history” should carry a weight of approximately 20% in the Spanish History test. In this respect, only the tests designed in Castile and León and La Rioja fully comply with the assessment of this content group. By contrast, the tests designed in the autonomous regions of Andalusia (option B), the Balearic Islands, Castile-La Mancha (option B), Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia (option B) and the Basque Country do not comply with the regulations laid down across Spain because they do not assess ancient and medieval history.

FIGURE 6. Weighting of each content group by autonomous region. 2019.



Note: the autonomous regions of Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura, Galicia and Madrid are not included, as the exact distribution of each group as regards the total cannot be calculated since they contain optional questions that influence the percentages.

- “Content group II: modern history” should carry a weight of 20% in the Spanish History test. Once again, the tests designed in Castile and León and La Rioja are the only ones that fully comply with the weighting of this content group. The tests designed in the autonomous regions of Castile-La Mancha (option A), Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia (option A) and the Basque Country do not comply with the regulations laid down across Spain because they do not assess modern history.
- As regards “content group III: contemporary history 19th century” it is stated that this

must carry a weight of 25% in the Spanish History test. The tests designed in Castile and León and La Rioja are again the only ones that fully comply with the weighting of this third content group. By contrast, the tests designed in the autonomous regions of Catalonia (option A), Valencia (option B), Galicia (option B), Murcia (option B) and the Basque Country (option B) do not comply with the regulations laid down across Spain because they do not assess contemporary history 19th century.

- “Content groups IV and V: contemporary history 20th century (1902-1939) and con-

temporary history 20th century (1939-present)” should carry a weight of 20% and 15% respectively (that is, 35%) in the Spanish History test. The tests designed in the Balearic Islands (option B), Castile and León and La Rioja are again the only ones that fully comply with the weighting of this third content group. The tests designed in the autonomous regions of Andalusia (option B), Catalonia (option A), Valencia (option B), Murcia (option B) and the Basque Country (option B) differ to a great extent from the weighting laid down in the regulations (some of them only assess this block with a total of 10 points). By contrast, the tests designed in Valencia (option A), Galicia (option A) and Murcia (option A) do not comply with the regulations laid down across Spain because they do not assess contemporary history 20th century.

Furthermore, three autonomous regions (Balearic Islands, Castile-La Mancha and La Rioja) penalise mistakes in formal aspects. Specifically, they consider a maximum penalty of up to 1 point as regards the total. The other autonomous regions make no reference to this respect.

3.4. Results based on possible relationships between the structure of tests and average performance

Once the information has been analysed based on the comparison units established, tests can be classified according to their degree of complexity.

Figure 7 shows the average results in each autonomous region in the first sitting together with an indication of the apparent level of easiness of the tests (under-

stood as the complexity of the content of tests or the workload involved in the tasks assigned to students).

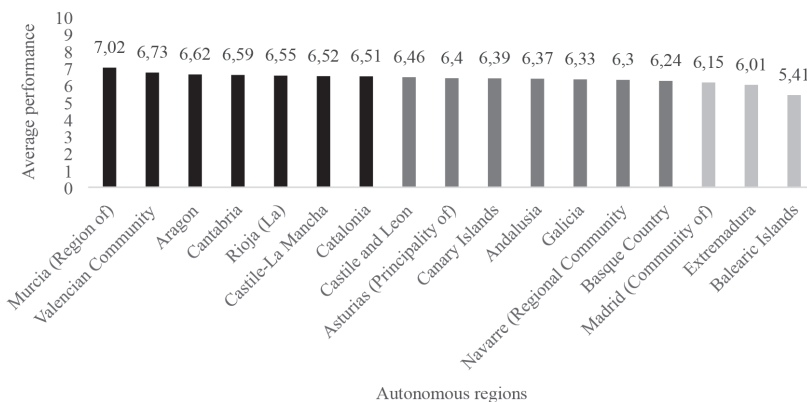
The following characteristics of the tests are observed, which may be affecting the marks of applicants:

- The highest average marks (>6.5). These account for the tests whose level of easiness is greater as they have the following characteristics:
 - The four autonomous regions in which higher average marks are obtained do not include any type of graphic language (figures, maps, timelines, or any others), but they are formulated with verbal and written language.
 - The options given by the tests designed in some autonomous regions, such as Murcia, Aragon, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha and Catalonia, may be the reason for which a higher average result is being obtained. However, care must be taken when interpreting this factor since the autonomous regions of Madrid, Extremadura and the Balearic Islands also offer options between items, and these are the regions in which the lowest average is obtained.
 - Valencia and Catalonia are two of the three autonomous regions where neither ancient and medieval history (blocks 1 and 2) nor modern history (blocks 3 and 4) are assessed; that is, they only evaluate contemporary history.

TABLE 3. Characteristics that determine the degree of complexity of the Spanish History tests of the EvAU.

Level of complexity of the tests	Characteristics	Autonomous regions
Simpler tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questions posed using verbal and written language, without including graphic language (figures, maps, timelines, etc.). - Options are given with a choice of exercises to be carried out. - These include fill in the blanks questions with a single correct answer; mistakes are not penalised. - Only the contemporary history block is assessed. 	Murcia Valencia Aragon Cantabria Castile-La Mancha Catalonia
Tests with the same degree of easiness/complexity	These tests have similar characteristics as regards the type of questions, type of assessment and structure.	
More complex tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More historical blocks as well as the block relating to contemporary history are assessed. - These consist of open-ended questions. - No options are given. - Historical content is assessed through the incorporation of graphic language. - Cognitive level 3 is required. 	Community of Madrid Balearic Islands

FIGURE 7. Relationship between the structure of Spanish History tests and average performance obtained in the first sitting by those examined in the aforementioned in 2019.



Note

- High level of easiness
- Medium level of easiness
- High level of easiness

- The Region of Murcia is where the best average results are obtained in this test. Furthermore, it is worth noting that this is the only region that includes filling in the blanks closed-ended questions where mistakes are not penalised. It is also one of the four autonomous regions that only assesses memory-type content. These facts may be considered relevant factors for which a higher average result is obtained in this test.
- Low average marks (<6.15). These account for the tests whose level of easiness is lower as they have the following characteristics:
 - In both the Community of Madrid and the Balearic Islands, there is a percentage of the overall test which is allocated to graphic language (generally, figures, maps and timelines). It is clear that the inclusion may be a factor that determines lower marks in the aforementioned.
 - The worst average results in this test are obtained in the Balearic Islands. It is worth noting that this is one of the five autonomous regions that demands cognitive level 3, that is, application of various concepts, interpretation and drawing of conclusions. It is also the autonomous region that demands the highest percentage of this, since 35% of the marks in this test are based on cognitive level 3.

The results obtained make it possible to prove the existence of substantial differences in the design of the Spanish History test for university entry according to the autonomous region in which it is applied and, therefore, in the average results of those who take it.

It is concluded that there are substantial differences in the structure of tests based on language, formulation (verbal language vs verbal and graphic language), optional nature, number of items and substantive historical content blocks which are assessed in each autonomous region, as stated in the previous section. In this respect, two aspects stand out in relation to the autonomous regions that have co-official languages. The first one has to do with the language in which the test is submitted. Catalonia and the Balearic Islands do not offer their test in Spanish (or at least no access has been given to this), while Valencia and Galicia make theirs available in both languages. It is worth noted that, in accordance with the provisions of article 14 of the Spanish Constitution, nobody may be discriminated against due to language since “Spaniards are equal before the law and may not in any way be discriminated against on account of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance”. The second aspect is related to the type of historical content included in these tests and the way in which it is assessed. In this sense, the tests designed in the Basque Country, Valencian Community and Catalonia are centred on only assessing contemporary history, and the test in Catalonia is notable as it focuses its attention on the assessment of events that have happened in the region. As stated by Gómez-Carrasco and Molina-Pu-

4. Discussion and conclusions

che (2017) and Molina-Puche et al. (2017) in their studies, this may give rise to the presence of regional elements in the assessment of Spanish History tests for university entry in Spain according to the different autonomous regions, thus affecting the degree of acquisition of historical literacy of those who take the tests. In turn, this fact may be distorting the true history of our country.

The cognitive level demanded in each of the tests differs, again, according to the autonomous region in which it is designed. In this respect, it may be concluded that the historical thinking achieved by the applicants who will gain entry to higher education will be different depending on the place in which the test is taken. These results coincide with those stated by Fuster (2016) who analysed the degree of development of historical thinking achieved by applicants. In turn, this fact coincides with the premise established previously on the distortion of Spanish history in the assessment of these tests. Also with the need to assess skills in the 21st century, a statement that is in line with what is laid down by Molina and Egea (2018) and Pantoja (2017) in their studies. In this respect, Spanish History tests for university entry should be designed, across Spain, so as to make it possible to assess, on the one hand, the historical knowledge acquired and, on the other hand, the critical thinking skills and historical analysis of students. That is, to make it possible to check whether students have acquired cognitive and metacognitive skills, as well as a better understanding of Spanish History and its teaching objectives, notably including the development of critical and analytical thinking, understanding of the present

and of the past and historical awareness and national identity, in addition to others.

The marks given to each historical content block vary according to the autonomous region in which the test is designed. This imbalance in the weighting, as well as the penalty in the Balearic Islands, Castile-La Mancha and La Rioja of up to 10% of the overall marking of the test is giving rise to imbalances in relation to what is stipulated in the regulations concerning the specification matrix of each historical content block assessed in accordance with Order of the Ministry for Presidency, Parliamentary Relationships and Equality/12/2019 and Royal Decree 310/2016. In addition, although these national regulations stipulate an approximate (%) for every content block in the Spanish History test, each autonomous region may specify this weight, but under no circumstances may it stop assessing any content block.

The aforementioned differences have made it possible to classify the tests according to their complexity. The easiest tests are those formulated with verbal and written language without including graphic language, where options are given, which only assess contemporary history, contain filling in the blanks closed-ended questions and where mistakes are not penalised. It may therefore be confirmed that, to a greater or lesser extent, the differences observed in average performance in the Spanish History tests are associated with the differences seen in their structure. The autonomous region where the EvAU is taken should not hinder chances of student success when it comes to picking a university and degree. However, the intrinsic characteristics of the tests, as well as the historical periods assessed, the number of items

that make up the test, optional nature, cognitive level demanded, type of tasks required and assessment criteria may be giving rise to this inequality among applicants from different geographical areas of Spain.

It is certain that direct relationships cannot be established between cause and effect in a statistically significant way. That is, it cannot be stated that the differences in average performance of applicants in this test due to autonomous region occur as a result of the differences in its design. Nonetheless, the most relevant point is that, in light of the evidence given in this study, it cannot be denied that design is a key factor that is having an influence on average performance.

Ultimately, this study shows, on the one hand, the heterogeneity of the Spanish History tests among autonomous regions. Other studies such as those by Ruiz-Lázaro and González (2017), Ruiz-Lázaro et al. (2021) and Ruiz-Lázaro (2022) have given proof of these discrepancies with the other compulsory tests for university entry. This study also proves aspects such as the impact of the design of tests in development of the historical thinking of students according to the autonomous region in which they are taken; inequality in entry conditions; different knowledge of Spanish history, due to both the linguistic circumstances and the syllabus and content; and the final proof that equality is not being fulfilled in accordance with the law provided for in article 14 of the Spanish Constitution.

In this respect, the changes proposed in the Draft royal decree regulating the basic characteristics of the university entrance exam and stating the calculation procedure for entry

marks, on the one hand, reinforce the aspects identified in the comparative analysis of autonomous regions of this study. However, on the other hand, the equality of opportunities must be effective and guarantee that the differences in entry into any public university in Spain are solely due to differences in the performance of students in the tests. An option must therefore be considered which makes it possible to compare grades and homogenize marks for entry into any Spanish university such as, for example, the existence of a part common to students from all autonomous regions.

It is therefore advisable to reconsider the university entrance exam in terms of its current content, structure and correction criteria, making it possible to guarantee all Spaniards the principle of equality. It also seems appropriate to consider delaying the start of the implementation period of the model proposed until the education community comes to an agreement on the final characteristics of an exam which is so important for the academic and professional future of students.

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