



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Spanish
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was a slight increase in the number of candidates, from 960 in 2011 to 1033 in 2012. 18 centres presented at Intermediate 1 for the first time. 60% of candidates were S3/4 with the majority of the rest either S5 or S6 and a small percentage from F.E. colleges. S4 presentations were up by 12%. The component averages were as follows;

The mean marks for each component were as follows;

- ◆ Paper 1 Reading 23.9 out of 35 (20.4 in 2011)
- ◆ Paper 2 Listening 14.6 out of 20 (11.2 in 2011)
- ◆ Paper 3 Writing 9.3 out of 15 (8.9 in 2011)
- ◆ Speaking 25.2 out of 30 (25.0 in 2011)
- ◆ Total 73.0% (65.5% in 2011)

The mean marks were up in each of the four components — quite considerably in Reading and Listening — compared with 2011. The results were by far the best ever at this level, with 59.8% of candidates achieving an A, 79.2% a B or better, and 91.9% passing the exam. 3.7% received a D and 4.3% a No Award. 10 candidates achieved 100% in the exam. Centres are to be congratulated on their teaching and preparation for this examination and candidates are to be commended on their excellent attainment at Intermediate 1 Spanish.

The examination was considered to be appropriate in terms of content and demand at this level, and related clearly to the teaching syllabus as outlined in the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1. Markers commented on the wording of questions, which was good, and the Marking Instructions, which were considered to be very fair to all candidates. The Pass mark for a C was set at 51%, a B 61%, an A 71% and an Upper A 86%.

The two shorter **Reading** passages dealt with background information about life in Spain and the city of Bilbao, and the two longer ones about a website for students looking for part-time work, and about some young people who had posted their profiles on the website.

As is the case every year, the **Listening** paper contained five transactional and five personal/social language items, and this year contained vocabulary on numbers and ages, days of the week, family, free time, school subjects, holidays and camping, food and drink, sporting activities and clothing/possessions.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The overall response of candidates was very good and most candidates performed well in all four components. There was evidence that they had prepared well for the examination and that they had been well prepared by their teachers/lecturers. It was particularly pleasing to

see candidates performed very well in both **Reading** and **Listening** and there was a slight improvement in **Writing** and **Speaking** from previous years. Markers commented that most candidates tackled all questions and that there were many excellent performances in **Writing** with a number of candidates going beyond the demands of the task in terms of language and structures and producing flawless, impressive performances.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In **Reading**, candidates generally coped well with all four questions. There was little evidence of extraneous material. Candidates lost marks by not giving enough detail in their answers. For Question 3(a)ii (worth two marks) 'Ofrece puestos de trabajo a tiempo parcial en todas las regiones de España', candidates did not give enough detail for the two marks. Question 4(g) caused most problems with confusion over the word 'batería', often translated as 'battery', and candidates did not give all the detail required from 'toco la batería en un grupo con unos amigos' to earn the mark. In Question 4(e) candidates often ticked one box or three boxes instead of two, losing marks on each occasion.

Listening was done very well. However, there remain issues for many candidates. Question 2(a) was not well done, with lots of candidates not understanding the 'lejos' of 'porque mis amigos viven bastante lejos'. Days of the week 'los martes y jueves' in Question 2(b) was not known (surprisingly) by 40% of candidates; and in Question 3(b) many candidates put 'it is boring' for 'la profesora es aburrida'. In Question 4(a) 'Irlanda' was often rendered as 'England'. In 5(a) 'where' in the question was often answered as 'when', ie 'next year' instead of the correct response, 'Ireland'. In question 5b there were difficulties with the preterites of 'no hizo buen tiempo', 'llovió muchísimo'. 'Servicios' in Question 6 was often rendered as 'services'.

In **Writing** there were good attempts made of all four sections by most candidates. Inevitably, there were examples which contained confusion with genders and verbs, spelling, accents, and other tongue interference; and a few examples where candidates did not complete three sentences for each section, particularly in the third and fourth sections.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

There is plenty of evidence that centres are preparing their candidates extremely well for all four components of the Intermediate 1 Spanish exam and that candidates are generally performing to a very high level.

Candidates should try to present their work as neatly as possible. If handwriting is illegible, points can be lost.

Reading and Listening

- ◆ Candidates should learn vocabulary for key areas, such as time, numbers, weather, colours, sports and pastimes, food and drink, jobs and careers, places in town, directions, common adverbs, prepositions and adjectives.
- ◆ Complacency and lack of care can mean that marks are lost for simple things like easy numbers.
- ◆ Candidates should carefully read the introductions and key question words such as **Who, When, What, Why** and so on.
- ◆ Candidates should always be careful and take their time with supported questions, which are not always necessarily easier.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to give detail in their answers in both Reading and Listening. A study of 2012 Marking Instructions will show the type of detail required to gain the marks allocated.
- ◆ Please stress to candidates that they are not allowed to give alternative answers, for example by using an oblique or brackets, be it in **Reading** or **Listening**. If one of the answers is incorrect, they will lose the mark, even if the other one is correct.

Writing

- ◆ Please share and discuss the Extended Criteria for Writing with candidates.
- ◆ The writing exercise is an opportunity for candidates to score really high marks because the exercise does not change from year to year. It is important that they get plenty of practice in this part of the assessment and that they get good feedback on their attempts.
- ◆ Candidates have to be aware that they need three verbs in each of the four sections. If not, there is an automatic deduction of two marks for each incomplete section.
- ◆ Candidates should be advised to use the dictionary only to check for accuracy in spelling and accents — not to make up new sentences in Spanish.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	995
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	1033
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	57.4%	57.4%	593	71
B	18.7%	76.1%	193	61
C	12.3%	88.4%	127	51
D	3.6%	92.0%	37	46
No award	8.0%	100.0%	83	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.