



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Spanish
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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 sizeable and most welcome increase in the number of candidates, from 1,423 in 2011 to 1,715 in 2012. 173 centres presented at Intermediate 2 Spanish and there were 29 centres presenting for the first time. Almost 65% of candidates were S4, with the majority of the rest either S5 or S6 and a small percentage from F.E. and S3.

The component averages were:

- ◆ Paper 1 Reading 18.7 out of 30 (19.2 in 2011)
- ◆ Paper 2 Listening 11.8 out of 20 (11.7 in 2011)
- ◆ Paper 3 Writing 14.6 out of 20 (14.2 in 2011)
- ◆ Speaking 24.9 out of 30 (24.6 in 2011)

As can be seen from the statistics, candidates performed marginally worse in Reading and Speaking and slightly better in Listening and Writing, and the overall total was almost the same in both years. Most candidates responded well to all parts of the paper, and they and their centres are to be commended for this.

The shorter Reading texts dealt with young people and their sleep patterns, an advert for a campsite, and smoking and young people. The longer text was on a survey of young people and their values. The Listening passages dealt with a woman's interest in music, the place where she lives and a young man talking about his job. For the Writing paper, the job application was for a supermarket assistant in a campsite.

Markers commented that all the texts for both papers, Reading and Listening, were accessible and of relevance and interest to candidates, as was the Writing stimulus. 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 2. Markers also commented on the wording of questions, which was good, and the marking keys, which were considered to be very fair to candidates

54.5% of candidates achieved an A award and 76.4% a B or better. 88.5% of candidates passed the examination A–C, and 11.5% received a D or a No Award. Five candidates scored 100% in the examination. Although the percentage number of candidates passing is very slightly down on last year, the statistics show a very able cohort who for the most part were presented at the appropriate level. The pass mark for a C and B was set at 48% and 58% respectively — the same as for the past two years, and an A was set at 69% and an Upper A at 84%.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates performed well in all areas of what was considered a very fair yet demanding paper.

Markers commented that they hardly marked a single paper in **Reading** where an answer had not been attempted and that the paper was reasonably well done on the whole. There were an encouraging number of candidates who scored 20 plus out of 30. Many candidates coped well with the questions which required an amount of detail to gain marks, eg Question 2(a) A cheaper way of spending the holidays, 3(c) It is 4 times more likely that the young people will smoke, 4(c) (i) 3,000 young people from 6 European cities. The same was true of understanding of more difficult concepts such as 4(b) They never speak to their parents and 4(c) (ii) They have more concerns than had been imagined. There will always be discriminatory items at this level, and it is admirable to see more able candidates coping with them.

In **Listening** the paper was considered to be very accessible but there was a very varied response, with some candidates scoring very high marks but most scoring around 11/12, and there were some very poor responses.

Many candidates were thoroughly prepared for the **Writing** and wrote full and interesting applications. Many candidates went beyond the level of language for Intermediate 2 and quite a lot achieved full marks. The majority scored 12 plus, and there were very few marks lost through missing bullet points.

The **Speaking** marks gave evidence of a well prepared and able cohort.

Areas which candidates found demanding

It must be said that, in general terms, candidates coped well with all parts of the examination, as indicated by number of candidates gaining an A or a B and the overall pass rate. However there are always areas that can be highlighted.

In **Reading**, many candidates found questions 2(a) and 4(c) ii particularly difficult. In the former question, candidates missed out on the comparative of 'más barata', thus losing the mark, and in the latter 'tienen más inquietudes de lo que habíamos imaginado' 'they have more concerns than we had imagined'. All other questions functioned in the expected manner.

There was a fair proportion of candidates who got basic numbers wrong, such as Question 1(b) 'después de las once', Q1(c) 'más de cinco horas', Q3(a) 'de entre trece y dieciocho años', Q4(c) 'tres mil jóvenes de seis ciudades europeos', Q4(i) 'mi hermana pequeña de seis meses'. Other mistakes in these examples were missing out 'after' in 1(b); 'more than' in 1(c); 'European countries' instead of 'cities' in 4(c); and 'six year old' instead of 'six month old' 4(i).

Candidates must watch out for questions where two details are required for one mark, eg 4(a) 'perezosos, sin ambición, egoístas'; 1(d)ii 'obesidad y riesgo de depression'. In both of these cases, candidate must give two of these details for the one mark, as highlighted in bold in the question. Likewise some candidate answers lacked specific detail to gain the mark.

In Question 4(g) some candidates translated 'compartir' as compare instead of share.

In the longer passage 4, there was also evidence of some candidates wrongly transposing answers.

In **Listening** at this level, detail is also required to gain the mark. Candidates who write 'Saturday' for 'los sábados por la tarde' in Question 1 (b), or 'August' for 'a principios del mes de agosto' in Question 3(d)i cannot expect to get the mark.

Questions 1(d)i 'plaza de toros' was not known surprisingly by over 60% of candidates, often translated as 'bull square' and 'plaza de todos', and along with 2(f) 'ir a dar un paseo por la playa' (with candidates missing out 'on going for a walk'), proved to be the most difficult questions in the listening.

In Q 2(a) many candidates put 'likes' instead of 'loves' for 'me encanta'. Other basic vocabulary like 'piscina', 'educación física', 'veinte', 'miércoles' and 'tiendas' was not known or heard by some candidates.

Writing was generally well done by most candidates, with very few candidates making it up as they went along. Many markers stated that the bullet point least well done was the one where they ask for information about the job, with many candidates often asking just one or two questions. In this respect, candidates should aim for a more balanced response, and candidates expecting to get a Good or Very Good award would normally expect to deal with this bullet in a fuller way. Some candidates failed to mention the job, and some found it difficult to identify the job from the advert, although 'ayudante' was in bold type.

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 2 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

- ◆ It is recommended that centres share this Report with candidates, along with the Marking Instructions for the 2012 paper, to demonstrate to them the correct amount of detail required for a mark at Intermediate 2 level in both 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 be encouraged to give detail in their answers in both Reading and Listening. A study of marking keys for both 2012 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.
- ◆ Candidates should take time to understand what the job is they are to apply for. It will be highlighted in bold, and a quick check at the dictionary will ensure that they have got it right.
- ◆ The writing exercise is an opportunity for candidates to score high marks as, although the job changes from year to year, most areas can be prepared and learned in advance. It is important that candidates get plenty of practice in this part of the assessment and that they get good feedback on their attempts.
- ◆ To achieve a Very Good award in Writing, candidates should address all five compulsory bullet points fully and in a balanced way, including some complex sentences, handling grammar and spelling accurately. The optional bullet points do not have to be attempted to achieve a top award but they can, of course, enhance the quality of an application.
- ◆ As stated in previous reports, some centres appear to use a template letter where no real attempt is made to personalise the application and, as a result, there are exam scripts where all letters are almost identical. Although candidates will not be penalised in any way for this, centres should be encouraged to make the exercise more meaningful in class by allowing candidates to bring in their own ideas and opinions into their applications with, of course, teacher-led support.

- ◆ Candidates should be advised to use the dictionary only to check for accuracy in spelling and accents, and not to make up new sentences in Spanish.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	1447
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	1715
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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	53.6%	53.6%	919	69
B	21.6%	75.2%	370	58
C	12.1%	87.2%	207	48
D	5.1%	92.3%	87	43
No award	7.7%	100.0%	132	-

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.