



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Spanish
Level(s)	Standard Grade

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

This year saw a small decrease in the number of candidates presented for the examination, from 3,462 in 2011 to 3,263. Results in Speaking were the best for many years at Grade 1, more than three percentage points up on last year. There was a very small increase in awards at Grade 2 compared to 2011. As a consequence, numbers of awards at General and Foundation were lower than last year, although the percentage of candidates achieving Grades 1–3 in Speaking showed a healthy 2.7% increase on last year.

In Writing, awards at Grade 1 (19%) are the highest since at least 2009 and, although that year's number of awards at Grade 2 was better (as is the cumulative figure of Grades 1 and 2), there is a 2 percentage point improvement in Credit awards over 2011. The 5 % improvement at Grade 3 is even more noteworthy, and the total for Grades 1–4 is once again the best of the last four years.

In Reading, performances at Credit Level were disappointing in comparison with last year. General and Foundation Level results were very much in line with the last three years.

Credit Listening produced better results than the reading paper, and once more General was in line with previous years. Foundation proved more of a test than last year.

When all these elements are combined, results show that the number of awards at Grade 1 is down on last year, while Grade 2 shows a 2.7% increase. Following from this, there is a 2.6% increase in numbers of candidates achieving Grades 1–4. There was also a drop of 1.2% in the numbers of candidates failing to achieve an award.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading

At Credit Level Reading satisfactory results were achieved in Q1a, b, and particularly d and f. Q3 a, b and c Q4 c and e.

At General Level candidates performed well in: Q1a, Q2, Q3b, Q5, Q7a, Q9a, c, Q10 in part.

At Foundation Level Qs 1-9 and Q10 were all well done.

Listening

At Credit Level, the following questions were well done: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4a, while Qs 5, 6 and 7 produced satisfactory results.

At General Level Qs 1-7 were well done.

At Foundation Level candidates performed well in Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q9, Q11.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Credit

- Q1 c candidates failed to recognise the superlative 'el mejor'
- Q1e the vast majority failed to see the distinction between 'being the best' and 'doing one's best'
- Q2 candidates had significant difficulties with this whole question. They seemed to find it difficult to connect the commands (particularly the negative ones) written in bold with the follow-up statements. There was a great deal of guesswork employed in the answers.
- Q3 c although a majority of candidates scored at least one point on this question, most were unable to cope with 'divide las vacaciones en quincenas' (poor English cost many here) and simply failed to understand that 'a mitad de semana' means 'in midweek'.
- Q4a many failed to make the connection between 'unique' and 'the only one'
- Q4b some candidates failed to read the question carefully and missed the fact of 'the feet' as opposed to 'the eyes'.
- Q4c many candidates mistranslated 'se siente' as 'he sits'.

General

- Q1b many candidates did not know that 'joinery' and 'carpinteria' are one and the same.
- Q2a many misunderstood the word 'seguros' as having some reference to the safety of the teacher
- Q4c few candidates knew 'te acuestas'
- Q5 was not well done throughout but most disappointing was the large number of candidates who did not recognise 'quince minutos'
- Q8 the second part of the answer 'los payasos me daban mucho miedo' was not accessible to large numbers of candidates
- Q10 although some candidates did well here many lost marks by giving additional wrong information, particularly relating to 'being cold' as opposed to 'having a cold'

Q11 few candidates understood 'las teclas mas utilizadas'.

Foundation

Q10a few candidates gave significant detail in their answer

Q12a few were able to understand 'esta de buen humor' and mistook this for 'having a sense of humour'.

Listening

Credit

There were not too many obvious issues but the following did prove tricky:

Q4b proved difficult. Most candidates gained 1 mark but failed to grasp that she did not like having to share a room.

Q7 few candidates understood 'me fascina'.

General

The paper divided into two parts, and difficulties arose in the latter questions:

Q8a many candidates failed to recognise 'gambas'

Q8b many did not know the word 'albondigas'!

Q8c many candidates chose to add something to a very simple answer, 'fruit' becoming 'fruit and....'

Q10a many candidates did not grasp 'edificios historicos' or 'ambiente'

Q10b was badly done on the whole.

Foundation

Difficulties all related to very specific items of vocabulary:

Q3 'nombres y apellidos'

Q8 'mochila' and 'playa'

Q12 'la sala de juegos' and 'sacos de dormir'.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Much of this advice has been given previously but still bears repetition.

The importance of reading both stimuli and questions cannot be over-emphasised. A number of marks are lost because candidates have not taken the time to work out exactly what is being asked and where in the text the answer is to be found.

Candidates should be made aware that, in many cases, it is in the precision of answers that marks can be gained or lost, particularly at Credit Level.

Candidates must take time to read over their answers. Similarly, the issue of poor handwriting was once again highlighted.

Much of the vocabulary being tested in both Reading and Listening papers is high frequency — numbers, food, school subjects, weather, family, etc — and centres should take every opportunity to reinforce it.

Once again, marks were lost to the Extraneous Rule. Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of this.

In Writing, it is important that tasks and topics chosen should be appropriate to the level of ability of the individual. For example, topics such as 'Myself' will not necessarily provide sufficient scope for more able candidates, while essays on 'My Favourite Film' will not be suitable for those of lesser ability. Centres should be aware that a wider range of topics might well be undertaken — although school, holidays and home town are perfectly valid, a wider view might provide candidates with a more stimulating experience of language learning.

Finally centres must ensure that materials that may be required for evidentiary purposes accurately reflect the demands of the course. Prelim papers must contain the correct number of supported marks; total marks for papers should match the final exam; there must be at least one question on the world of work at every level in reading and reading texts must be composed of continuous prose (lists of recipe ingredients, place names, etc are not suitable). Most importantly, the level of demand must be appropriate — stimuli must be of adequate length, answers in Spanish are not acceptable ('fiesta', 'paella', 'chorizo', etc). For further guidance on this centres should consult the specimen papers available on the SQA website. Lastly, it is of fundamental importance that marking keys are adhered to, and that all the required evidence (including listening transcripts) is submitted when required.

Statistical information: update on Courses

STANDARD GRADE

Number of resulted entries in 2011	3439
Number of resulted entries in 2012	3263

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	15.8%
Grade 2	28.5%
Grade 3	26.7%
Grade 4	17.9%
Grade 5	7.4%
Grade 6	2.4%
Grade 7	0.1%
No award	1.2%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	26	14	9	32	19	13	33	21	16
L	25	17	12	26	14	11	27	15	9