



External Assessment Report 2013

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

2013 saw yet another considerable, and welcome, increase in presentations at Intermediate 2 Spanish — to 2,056, compared with 1,715 in 2012. 64% of candidates were S4, 6% S3, around 28% S5 or S6, and less than 1% from the further education sector. The mean marks for the different papers were as follows, with the 2012 marks in brackets:

- ◆ Paper 1 Reading 20.4 out of 30 (18.7)
- ◆ Paper 2 Listening 13.8 out of 20 (11.8)
- ◆ Paper 3 Writing 15.4 out of 20 (14.6)
- ◆ Speaking 25 out of 30 (24.9)

These marks showed a great improvement overall, but particularly across the written papers, and were evidence of a very able cohort. Grade boundaries were set at 51% for a C, 61%, for a B, and 71% for an A. An upper A was set at 86%.

An impressive 80.4% of candidates achieved a B award or better, with 60.8% achieving an A, 27.5% of whom received an upper A. 92% of candidates received a grade A–C, with 8% a D grade or No Award. Seven candidates achieved 100% in the examination. Candidates and their teachers/lecturers are to be congratulated on their excellent preparation for the examination. Most candidates were presented at the correct level and it is clear that many of them where appropriate will achieve greatly at Higher.

The content of the examination clearly related to the teaching syllabus, as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 2, and was of the appropriate level of difficulty. Markers noted that the papers and marking instructions were very fair.

Overall the performance of candidates was very good. There were very few poor performances. The Reading passages dealt with the issue of overweight children in Spain, a job fair run by the German Chamber of Commerce in Madrid, and an article about a boy genius. The longer passage was about the experiences of young Spanish people giving up their summer holidays to do voluntary work in Peru. Markers noted that the paper content was excellent, with a good balance of accessible questions and other more challenging ones.

In Paper 2 Listening the main themes/topics were school, family life, and holidays. Markers commented on the very clear recording, and the appropriate register and speed and clear diction of the two speakers.

The job application was for a secretary in an office in Alicante.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates performed well in all parts of the examination.

The **Reading** paper provided a good opportunity for candidates at this level to show their ability. Candidates gave good and fairly detailed responses, with good English expression, to nearly all of the questions, and very few failed to complete or pass the paper. It was clear that candidates had worked on past papers and had been well trained in answering questions and coping with the time allocated to the paper. No particular questions merit special mention as all were done well.

Most candidates found the **Listening** paper quite straightforward. Very few achieved less than half marks, and several achieved full marks. In Questions 1a, 1b(i), 2a, and 3b, more than 90% of candidates got the correct answers. Candidates were well coached to not give alternative answers.

In **Writing** most candidates performed well, with very few achieving low grades. There were a considerable amount of candidates in the 16–20 brackets — indeed some Markers commented that these were the two most common marks awarded. There were very few missed bullet points, and it is clear that candidates have been very well prepared and have themselves made a very good effort to prepare and write more than acceptable letters of application. It is particularly pleasing when candidates write a personalised response to the letter, rather than the same letter being learned by heart by a whole class.

In **Speaking** marks were again very high, demonstrating excellent preparation by candidates and their centres.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Most candidates coped well with the entire paper. However, three questions were more discriminating and less than half of the candidates got the marks allocated to them.

- ◆ Question 3d ‘What had Pablo already done by the age of six?’ *A los seis años, Pablo ya había leído varias obras de literatura en inglés.* Here many candidates did not recognise either the pluperfect or the past participle *leído*.
- ◆ In Question 4e (i) ‘What does Marcos Ribera say about living with the families?’ *La vivencia con familias fue uno de los puntos fuertes.* Here Spanish word order caused problems, and also candidates missed out *one of* in their answers.
- ◆ Finally, the last question, 4g, ‘In the opinion of Juan Montoya, what have the young people demonstrated? Mention in detail **two** things.’ (2) *El jefe, Juan Montoya, concluye que los jóvenes voluntarios han demostrado su capacidad de trabajar en equipo y, lo más importante, de cuidar con cariño a los más pequeños de Perú...* Often, dictionary misuse/mistranslation of *equipo* as ‘equipment’ or ‘equipped’, *cuidar* as ‘city’, and lack of detail in answers led to candidates losing at least one of the two marks on offer here. Many candidates got the general meaning but missed details so lost out on marks.

In addition, basic numbers disappointingly led to candidates losing marks, eg Question 1a mistaking *doce* for ten, and Question 4f(i) *dieciséis* for seventeen. *Alemania* in Question 2 was not recognised by many and left as *Alemania*. *Mayor* in Question 2b *gente mayor* was translated as ‘mayor’, *trabajadores* in Question 2c *busca trabajadores españoles* as ‘hard working’.

Also lack of detail in answers led to candidates losing marks. In Question 3b candidates missed out 'gold', the 'ice' of 'ice hockey', and 'black belt' in their answer to Pablo's sporting achievements: *Este joven mexicano tiene medallas de oro en hockey sobre hielo y es cinta negra en taekwondo*. In Question 4c some candidates failed to give both 'read' and 'write' in their answer to the morning activities: *Por la mañana ayudamos a enseñar a los niños a escribir y leer*.

Listening

Many candidates got the general meaning but missed out on details so lost out on marks.

- ◆ In Question 1d(i) *¡Y pensar que tengo tantos exámenes dentro de un mes a finales de junio!* candidates merely replied with June and did not get the mark.
- ◆ Likewise 'very' was required at this level for Question 1d(ii) 'How does this make her feel?' *¡Estoy muy estresada!*
- ◆ In Question 2d 'What **two** things does Carlos like to do with his grandfather?' (2) *y a veces vamos juntos a tomarnos un helado y dar un paseo por el parque*. This was done fairly badly, yet is fairly straightforward vocabulary. 'Go to the park' or 'go for a walk' would be insufficient answers here.
- ◆ In Question 3a(ii) 'little' or 'younger sister' was required in the answer for *hermana pequeña*. There was also mistranslation of *hermana* as 'brother'.

Writing

Some candidates failed to identify the job title, *secretario/secretaria*, even although it is given in bold in the advert. In one centre, candidates had not copied the formal opening and ending to the letter of application, as given in the question paper. As usual, the request for information about the job and the reasons for application are the more thinly covered bullet points, often resulting in a less balanced essay and on occasions preventing candidates from achieving full marks. Some candidate responses are too long, resulting in less accuracy.

Some common school related mistakes highlighted by Markers were: 'mejorar mi español' instead of the correct *mejorar mi nivel de español*; 'estudio la historia, la geografía...' instead of *estudio historia, geografía...*; 'soy fuerte en mates', which should be *se me dan bien las mates*; and 'voy en cuarto' which should be *estoy en cuarto*.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates and their teachers/lecturers are to be congratulated on the high level of achievement at Intermediate 2 Spanish in all components of the examination. The following advice is given with a view to maintaining and indeed enhancing this high level of performance.

- ◆ In both **Reading** and **Listening**, candidates must give detail in their answers and appreciate the importance of qualifiers, such as *bastante* or *muy*, at this level. However, candidates must not give alternative answers, for example by using brackets or an oblique. If one of the answers is incorrect, they will lose the mark, even if the other one is correct.

- ◆ Detailed marking instructions for **Reading/Listening** are available on the SQA website. These show the type of detail required for answers. Please share them with candidates.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to memorise vocabulary of the prescribed themes and topics, and be confident in key areas such as numbers and time, prices, weather, colours, sports and pastimes, food and drink, jobs and careers, places and directions, common adjectives and adverbs and prepositions and so on to be able to cope especially with the **Listening** paper, where a dictionary is not available. This is also true for **Reading**, where candidates will save valuable time if they know the word rather than having to refer constantly to the dictionary.
- ◆ Many candidates are using excellent constructions and expressions, and are being taught some very good idiomatic expressions and business language, which they are using to great effect in their applications for the **Writing** paper. Candidates should be encouraged to write personalised essays which are more meaningful, and centres should avoid a template approach to the exercise.
- ◆ Some candidates, too, should be better prepared for the section on asking for information, and should be aware that even in otherwise Very Good essays, expressions such as 'Quisiera más información sobre el puesto' will not be sufficient to ensure a top mark. Specific questions should be asked for this bullet point.
- ◆ Candidates should write a balanced response in the form of a paragraph to each of the five compulsory bullet points, with perhaps a blank line between each one, and the same with the two optional ones, if they wish to cover these. This gives the letter a sense of structure and balance, and makes it easy for the candidate to check that he or she has covered all of the bullet points.
- ◆ Less able candidates who find it difficult to memorise material should be encouraged to concentrate only on the five compulsory bullets in an uncomplicated way, and perhaps avoid the two optional ones.

General

- ◆ Candidates should read over all their answers to ensure that they make sense, and that their English expression is clear.
- ◆ When writing in Spanish they should make sure that they thoroughly check over their work for **accents, spelling and grammatical accuracy**. Likewise they should always try to present their work as neatly as possible.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	1715
---	------

Number of resulted entries in 2013	2056
---	------

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	60.8%	60.8%	1250	71
B	19.6%	80.4%	404	61
C	11.5%	92.0%	237	51
D	3.0%	95.0%	62	46
No award	5.0%	100.0%	103	-

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.