



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Spanish
Level	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

There was a slight increase in the number of presentations from 735 in 2008 to 774 in 2009. The examination was considered to be appropriate in terms of content and demand at this level. The content of the examination related clearly to the teaching syllabus as outlined in the prescribed themes and topics at Intermediate 1 level. Almost 8% of candidates were presented in S3, 35% in S4, 47% S5/6 and almost 10% were FE students. Markers considered all questions to be accessible to candidates, and commented on the very clearly worded questions, and very fair marking schemes for Reading and Listening, and on the excellent extended GRC for the writing exercise, which are very useful both for marking essays and for the preparation of their own candidates. The Reading paper featured a passage on a Spaniard's views on Scotland, and one about a group of 8-15 year olds spending the summer helping police carry out their duties. The Listening covered the usual wide range of topics both personal and transactional, yet candidates' performance in this paper was not as good as last year. Writing was done marginally better than last year.

Component averages were as follows, with 2008 in brackets.

Reading Total 35% 22.3 (22.8)

Listening Total 20% 11 (14.0)

Writing Total 15% 9.4 (9.0)

Speaking 30% 24.9 (24.8)

This gave an overall average mark for the examination of 68.6 in 2009 compared with 70.6 in 2008, although it was almost identical to 2007 where the average mark was 68.7. Bearing in mind the slightly more difficult examination the grade boundaries were set at 49 for a C, 59 for a B, 69 for an A and 84 for an upper A. Almost half of the candidates -48.7%- were awarded an A pass and 70.2% received a B pass or better. 83.6 % of candidates received a Grade A-C and 127 candidates- or 16.4%- received a D or No Award. 39 candidates received a No Award, which is a cause for concern.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates were presented at the appropriate level and coped well with all aspects of the examination. In the Reading, almost all candidates managed to complete the paper, indicating that lack of time was not in any way an issue. Fewer questions were left blank or were not attempted. Most candidates scored well in the longer more demanding texts, as well as the shorter first two.

There was a degree of challenge in the Listening paper but some exceptional performances were noted. Centres commented on the clear delivery of the Listening CD.

There was again this year almost no need to apply the extraneous rule in either Listening or Reading, an indication that candidates are more aware not to exceed the amount of information indicated by the question. In Writing, there were very many examples of Very Good performances, with candidates going far beyond the required level of language at this level, using different tenses and even the imperfect subjunctive! Most candidates completed all four sections in a balanced way and overall performance was very good. Markers noted that the extended criteria for Writing were a great help in assessing the Writing exam, and should also indeed be helpful to centres in preparing candidates for the examination.

Markers noted too that all marking keys worked well and no contentious areas arose in the marking process.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Again, it must be stated that in general terms, candidates coped very well with all parts of the paper, as indicated by the average marks above and the overall pass rate, particularly at A and B level.

In Reading, candidates found the final section of Q3 quite complex and this was misunderstood by some.

Overall the response to Q3 was in some cases poorer than to Q4. Although wording of questions was very clear, candidates often misread them and confused, for example, **When?** with **What?** There was also evidence of candidates misplacing information and giving the same answers for two different questions.

In Listening, Questions 1-3 – were not generally well done Q1 **¿Es tu primera visita a España?**, Q2 **en la planta baja, el agua está muy caliente** and Q3 **a diez kilómetros de aquí** were often not understood. Few candidates understood **helado** and **me duelen los pies** in Q10. Also, many candidates translated **Yo** in Q4 as Joe!

The Writing was generally well prepared and most candidates attempted all 4 sections. The section on **Ciudad o pueblo donde vives** was the least well done. It was reassuring to see so few Poor performances in Writing, although there were some.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As indicated earlier, there is ample evidence that centres are preparing their candidates well for the Intermediate 1 Spanish exam and both centres and candidates are to be congratulated on this.

Reading and Listening

- Candidates should carefully read the introductions and the key question words for each question such as **Who, When, What** or **Why**.
- Candidates should ensure that they tick only the required number of boxes and that T for True and F for False are clearly written!
- Candidates should be aware that they will hear the Listening twice only, unlike the three times for unit assessment.
- Candidates should learn vocabulary for the common areas of vocabulary indicated in the prescribed themes and topics, such as time, daily routine, numbers, weather, colours, sports and pastimes, food, and drink, jobs and careers, places in town, directions, common adverbs, prepositions, question words and adjectives. A quick glance through the Listening transcript will prove that most of these have been tested again this year in the exam.
- Complacency and lack of care can mean that marks are lost for simple things like easy numbers, which is a real pity.
- In all three papers, candidates are encouraged to pay attention to detail and accuracy. Detailed marking keys for Listening/Reading for this and previous years are available on the SQA website for perusal and these show the type of detail required for answers. It would be worthwhile to share these with candidates to show them why particular answers are acceptable or unacceptable.

Writing

- Candidates should be encouraged to use their dictionary in writing only to check up spelling and accents for this exercise which they have, after all, been preparing all session.

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 again should make sure that they thoroughly check over their work for accents, spelling and grammatical accuracy. Likewise they should try to present their work as neatly as possible, and ensure that in listening, all rough notes are crossed out.
- The folder of exemplification from the National Professional Development Workshop held in 2007 on Writing at Intermediate 1 and 2 levels is available from SQA. In addition, exemplification of Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Good and Very Good Writing Tasks for Intermediate 1 with Descriptors based on the extended pegged marked descriptors can be downloaded from the SQA secure website. These criteria state for example that for a Very Good performance, candidates will use at least 9 different verbs or verb forms. Repetition and lack of variety, however accurate, can bring marks down. It would be worthwhile to share one or two of the better quality writing tasks here with candidates to show them what is required to produce a good essay and to discourage them from just producing a minimalist response to the task of three sentences for each area.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	778
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	805
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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	47.5%	47.5%	382	69
B	20.1%	67.6%	162	59
C	12.5%	80.1%	101	49
D	5.6%	85.7%	45	44
No award	14.3%	100.0%	115	-

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.