



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Spanish</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</b>

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 fairly sizeable and encouraging increase in candidate presentations, with 899 in 2010, compared with 805 in 2009. 99 centres presented for Intermediate 1 Spanish this year. There was an increase of 5.7% in the number of candidates presented at S3/4.

60.6% of candidates received a B award or better, with 38.6% receiving an A pass, a fine achievement by them. 79.1% received an award A–C, 6.8% a D award, and 14.1% received a No Award. This is a real cause for concern, and worth considering by centres whose candidates are not achieving an award.

The component averages for each element were as follows. (The marks for 2009 are given in brackets.)

- ◆ Paper 1, Reading: 19.8 out of 35 (22.3)
- ◆ Paper 2, Listening: 10.0 out of 20 (11.0)
- ◆ Paper 3, Writing: 9.1 out of 20 (9.4)
- ◆ Speaking: 25.2 out of 30 (24.9)

After due consideration, the pass mark for a C was set at 48%, for a B at 58%, and for an A and an Upper A at 68% and 83% respectively.

The component averages show an encouraging performance in all parts of the examination, although the marks for Reading and Listening were down on last year. The average for both Writing and for Speaking show a well prepared and well taught cohort.

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 of Intermediate 1. Markers commented on the wording of questions, which was good, and on the marking keys, which were considered to be very fair to candidates.

The Reading Paper had its usual four passages, two shorter and two longer. One of these was a survey on internet users, one about a young lady and how she spent her Sundays, one dealt with a secretary and her job, and one was an article on going to the gym.

As ever, the Listening paper contained five transactional and five personal transactions items, and contained vocabulary on jobs, languages and nationalities, directions and places in town, free time and hobbies, shopping and prices, numbers, times, and sports.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

There were many candidates who coped admirably with all components of the exam, as evidenced by the high proportion who gained an A or a B award. In Reading, most candidates coped well with the shorter texts of Questions 1 and 2 and with the longer text 3, and most managed to complete the paper.

Listening was generally well done, with some very good performances. Although the average mark was 10 out of 20, there were still some very good performances, with candidates scoring full marks or marks in the high teens. Again, most candidates completed the paper, although there was evidence at times of guesswork.

There was fewer incidences again this year of having to apply the extraneous rule in Listening and Reading, which shows that candidates are being well trained in not exceeding the amount of information required for their answers.

In the Writing paper, there were a great many very good and good performances, with candidates going beyond the requirements of the examination.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Most candidates were presented at the appropriate level and coped well with all aspects of the examination. However, as always there were areas of concern.

In Question 4 of the Reading paper, candidates lost marks through misplaced information, and often based their responses on their own knowledge of going to the gym and healthy living, rather than on the content of the passage. A few candidates failed to complete the Reading paper, and Markers felt this was a time management issue for them.

Also in Question 1 (a), time expressions were shown to be at times weak in this supported item, with candidates electing for 'at the weekends' or 'once a week' for *todos los días*. In Question 1, many candidates failed to complete the task, ticking only three or four instead of five boxes.

In Question 2 (b), where candidates were to 'tick **three** things', a few candidates ticked none of the boxes. In Question 3 (d), there was poor command of numbers, with *trescientas* often mistranslated. There was evidence throughout the Reading of candidates not reading the questions properly and relying too much on their dictionary.

In Listening, some candidates do not know the vocabulary for straightforward topics such as work experience, jobs, directions, clothes, days of the week, free time and family. In addition, some candidates were not putting enough detail into their answers, eg:

- ◆ Question 3 (b): 'there is a lot of noise **at night**'
- ◆ Question 5 (a): '**at the end** of August'
- ◆ Question 7 (b): '2 Euros **an hour**'
- ◆ Question 10: 'the number of visitors is limited **to 80**'

In Writing, most candidates completed the task, although a few did not complete one or more of the four sections. Some Markers felt that section 1, *familia*, could be developed better by centres/candidates, and that there was an overuse of *tengo* as the main and often only verb.

There were a few candidates for whom the Writing task was clearly beyond their ability, and who could not produce the three sentences for the four sections with any degree of accuracy.

## **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 their candidates are to be congratulated on this.

### **Reading and Listening**

For the Reading paper, centres must be confident that their candidates have had sufficient practice in coping with four reading texts in the 45 minutes allocated to the task in the exam. Too many candidates are not managing to complete the paper due to time management issues.

Centres should ensure, particularly for Listening where a dictionary is not available, that candidates have a sound knowledge of the vocabulary indicated in the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1. Areas such as time, daily routine, numbers, weather, colours, clothes and prices, sports and pastimes, food, and drink, jobs and careers, places in town, directions, common adverbs, prepositions, question words, and adjectives are tested this and every year.

There is evidence of a need for more rigorous training in listening skills and practice at Intermediate 1 level.

Candidates should carefully read the introductions and the key question words for each question, such as **who**, **when**, **what** or **why**. Too often, candidates are misplacing information due to not reading the question carefully enough.

Please stress to candidates that they are not allowed to 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.

Candidates should ensure that they tick only the required number of boxes. Likewise, if asked, for example, to *tick three boxes*, they should tick three, and not one or two or indeed no boxes, as happened in this year's exam.

Detailed marking keys for Listening/Reading for this and previous years are available on the SQA website. 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

The Writing paper is unchanged from year to year. It is important that all candidates have prepared properly for it to the best of their ability.

Candidates could be encouraged to use a greater range of verbs in section 1, *familia*, instead of relying too much on *tengo*, which is sometimes their only verb. For example, occupations and personalities could be brought in.

In section 3, candidates should avoid giving a long list of subjects studied, which can lead to lots of spelling mistakes and missing accents.

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

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 nine 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.

## 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.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	805
Number of resulted entries in 2010	899

## 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	38.6%	38.6%	347	68
B	22.0%	60.6%	198	58
C	18.5%	79.1%	166	48
D	6.8%	85.9%	61	43
No award	14.1%	100.0%	127	—

### 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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.