



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Spanish
Level	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 considerable and very encouraging increase in the number of candidates, from 1224 in 2009 to 1477 in 2010. 156 centres presented candidates for Intermediate 2 Spanish. 51% of the candidates were S4 and the remainder were S5/6 and FE students. These were similar proportions to 2009.

61.3% of candidates received an A award, a remarkable achievement. 80% of candidates received a B award or better. 90.1% gained a pass A–C, with the remaining 9.9% receiving a D or no award.

The small number of candidates who failed the examination indicates a very able and well prepared cohort who were presented at the appropriate level. Candidates and their teachers/lecturers are to be congratulated on the excellent preparation which has undoubtedly taken place, and on the excellent candidate performance overall in the examination.

Markers commented that the Reading and Listening papers were set at the correct level, and that the wording of questions and the marking keys were very clear and fair to candidates. The Reading paper contained four passages as normal: these interesting and varied texts dealt with: (1) a new type of service offered by a Spanish hotel chain; (2) a new video game; (3) advice offered about what to do after leaving school; and the longer passage (4) was about a survey among young people on public services in the province of Malaga.

The three questions in the Listening paper dealt with free time, friendships and relationships, and holidays. The Writing paper consisted of a job application for a receptionist in a sports centre.

The component averages for each paper were as follows, with the figures for 2009 in brackets:

- ◆ Reading: 19.6 out of 30 (20.4)
- ◆ Listening: 12.7 out of 20 (14.5)
- ◆ Writing: 14.9 out of 20 (15.1)
- ◆ Speaking: 24.4 out of 30 (24.4)

The Speaking, Writing and Reading marks were very similar to 2009, but the Listening average was down by 1.8%, although it was closer to the average marks of 2007 and 2008.

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

Areas in which candidates performed well

In Reading, most candidates answered the questions well and managed to complete the paper. There were some excellent performances in this part of the examination. Markers commented that most candidates were achieving marks in the 20s for this paper. All questions were challenging and relevant, and Question 4 was particularly demanding, but able candidates performed well and gave a good account of themselves.

Many candidates scored highly with the three shorter texts, and many managed to sustain this with their answers to Question 4. There were some excellent performances too in Listening, where some able candidates achieved full marks. Candidates scored particularly highly in Question 1 of this paper. As with last year in Reading and Listening, there was less incidence of the need to apply the extraneous rule, which is evidence that candidates are being well trained to give the required amount of information in their answers.

The overall response of candidates in the Writing paper was very good, with some impressive and flawless performances. There were lots of nice touches which lifted the performance of many, for example with the use of the imperfect, preterite, present continuous, and idiomatic expressions like *solía*, *suelo*, *me resulta*, *tengo ganas de*, and so on. Candidates generally were very well prepared, and lots of applications were personalised, giving the appearance of true applications, and not something which has just been learned. There were very few unsatisfactory and poor performances in the Writing.

Areas which candidates found demanding

This section must begin by commenting that the vast majority of candidates performed well in all components of the examination, and that there were very few poor performances. However, there are always areas of possible improvement which can be highlighted.

With Reading, the general feeling was that candidates were coping with the texts. Sometimes candidates' command of English and poor expression let them down. There was also evidence of poor use of the dictionary, where candidates looked up words, put down the first meaning found, but clearly did not understand the text. There was poor translation, for example of *emplear platos más pequeños* in answer to Question 2 (c), and *por las calles* in Question 4 (c).

There were also examples of misplaced answers, particularly in response to the longer Question 4. Many candidates failed to recognise the last paragraph of Question 4 at the top of page 7 of the Reading paper, and looked for the answer to Question 4 (i) at the bottom of page 6.

A few candidates struggled with the Listening paper. Quite a few candidates did not know *zapatería* in Question 1 (d), *queso*, *galletas* and *miel* in Question 3 (d), and *fuegos artificiales* and *bailar en la plaza* in Question 3(f). In Question 2, 'red' was given for *rubio* and quite a few did not know *dibuja*. In Question 2 (f), 'rude' was given for *ruidosa*. Question 3 seemed to be the most testing for candidates.

There were still occasions where candidates were losing marks in both Reading and Listening through persisting in giving incorrect additional information.

In the Writing paper, there are still examples of candidates applying for the wrong job, and also where candidates applied for the post of *calle Jacinto Benavente* or *Polideportivo*. Some candidates are not covering all five compulsory bullet points and are needlessly losing marks. Some candidates particularly struggled with the bullet requesting information about the job. In addition, some candidates gave full responses to the two optional bullet points, but very thin responses to bullets 4 and 5.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Listening

It is good to report that the extraneous rule is having to be applied less and less in Reading and Listening. Centres should continue to emphasise that candidates give full and detailed answers but be equally guided by the number of points allocated to each answer. Normally this is also highlighted after the question by something like 'mention **one** thing' or 'give **two** details'.

Candidates should be encouraged, as in previous years, to learn vocabulary in key prescribed areas, such as numbers and time, daily routine, prices, weather, colours, sports and pastimes, food and drink, jobs and careers, places and directions, and common adverbs and adjectives. A sound knowledge of these is particularly important for the Listening test, where candidates do not have access to a dictionary.

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.

There is evidence of a need for more rigorous training in listening skills and practice at Intermediate 2 level.

Writing

More time could be spent by candidates to ensure that they understand the actual job they are applying for. This should be their priority before they even start to think about writing anything. There are still some, though not many, candidates who are applying for the wrong job, where the maximum possible award is 8/20 or 'unsatisfactory'.

Centres should ensure that all candidates are aware that to get a good or very good award, all five compulsory bullet points have to be addressed fully, as a letter which does not do this has less chance of a top mark. Less able candidates who struggle to memorise material should probably be encouraged to focus solely on the five compulsory bullet points and not to attempt the optional bullet points.

Exemplification of unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good and very good essays, with descriptors based on the recent extended pegged marked descriptors, can be downloaded from the SQA secure website. It would be worthwhile to share one or two of the better essays 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**. The dictionary should only really be used to check spelling and accents. In addition, candidates should try to present their work as neatly as possible.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	1224
Number of resulted entries in 2010	1477

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	61.3%	61.3%	905	68
B	18.7%	80.0%	276	58
C	10.2%	90.1%	150	48
D	3.5%	93.6%	51	43
No award	6.4%	100.0%	95	—

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.