



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Spanish
Level	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

For the first time in a number of years, there was a small decrease in the number of candidates presented for the examination. There was an encouraging increase in the numbers achieving Grade 1 and a smaller increase in those achieving Grade 2.

Overall the numbers achieving a Credit award returned to the levels of 2007 and 2008 after a disappointing drop last year. The upward trend continued at Grade 3 and by definition fewer candidates achieved Grades 4, 5 and 6. Overall there was a pleasing increase in the numbers of candidates achieving an award.

In the directly graded elements, there were some variations in performance. In Speaking, there was once again an improvement in the numbers achieving Grade 1. There was a marginal decrease in the numbers awarded a Grade 2, but overall there was an increase in the numbers achieving a Credit award. There was also an increase in the numbers achieving Grade 3, with a corresponding drop in the figures at Grades 4, 5 and 6.

In Writing, the results at Grade 1 were identical to last year, but a drop in performance at Grade 2 means that the numbers achieving a Credit award are slightly reduced (and are considerably lower than estimated by centres). There was, however, a significant improvement at Grade 3, which means that overall Grades 1–3 are virtually identical to 2009. Slightly fewer candidates than last year achieved Grades 4 and 5, but there was a 1.5% increase in the numbers awarded a Grade 6.

In Reading, there was a considerable increase in the numbers achieving Grade 1 and an equally significant upward movement in the numbers achieving a Credit award. Overall the numbers achieving Grades 1–4 was considerably improved from last year.

In Listening, there was significant improvement at Credit level, with many more candidates achieving Grades 1 and 2. At both General and Foundation levels, results were comparable with 2008.

In summary, results were encouraging.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers expressed their satisfaction with the standard of Writing Folios. Virtually all candidates managed to produce three reasonable pieces of work, and there were some outstanding essays submitted this year. As ever, those candidates who were given freedom to express their own ideas achieved well. All Markers commented that the fewer templates that are used, the better are the grades achieved by more able pupils.

Credit Listening was particularly well done this year. Many more candidates than in previous years achieved the notional cut-off score.

The Foundation level papers in both Listening and Reading were well done by the vast majority of candidates.

Areas which candidates found demanding

General Reading was particularly poorly done this year. A number of candidates have difficulties in coping with anything more than one-word answers and seem unable to locate information in passages of any length. The standard of written English is sometimes poor, and many Markers commented on the very poor handwriting of many candidates.

As ever, many candidates struggled with basic vocabulary in both Reading and Listening papers — food and drink, weather, family members, etc, together with individual items like *preciosa, medicina, oficina, bares, dibujos animados, caramelos*, etc.

There was a significant increase in the number of marks lost to the extraneous rule this year, which may point to the need for centres to explain to candidates the hazards of including too much, often contradicting information.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should impress on candidates that there is no need for complicated responses to simple questions.

For Reading and Listening, there is a general principle that one mark equals one piece of information. Centres should, however, be aware that where very basic vocabulary is involved (eg *arte e historia, pantalones cortos y una camiseta*), particularly at Credit level, more than one item may be required to gain the mark.

The importance of reading questions carefully cannot be over-emphasised, including the instructions at the top of the page. On many occasions, candidates do not take account of the 'situation' described as a background to the texts.

Similarly, candidates should always take the time to read over their answers to ensure that their responses make sense.

Candidates should be trained to look for key words in questions. Many marks are lost because candidates do not take account of words like 'first' (eg 'What was the first thing Juan did?') or 'best' (eg 'What did he like best about Edinburgh?').

Listening practice is imperative — some candidates are not aware of the technique of listening for specific types of information, and allow themselves to be confused by the amount of language contained in stimuli.

Much of the vocabulary being tested is very basic, particularly at Foundation level 3 — numbers, food, clothing, school subjects, weather, family, etc — and centres should take every opportunity to reinforce it.

Centres need to reinforce the use of the extraneous rule. More marks than in previous years were lost to this. If a question says ‘mention three things’, no more than three things should be mentioned.

Candidates need more training in the use of the dictionary. It is clear that many simply choose the first option listed without considering the context.

In Writing, it is important that the tasks and topics chosen should be appropriate to the level of ability of the individual. Too many centres are adopting a ‘one size fits all’ approach. For example, dialogues and letters will not provide the best platform for more able candidates to expand on their own ideas, while issues such as the relative merits of town and country are not necessarily within the range of less able pupils.

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. It would be perhaps very beneficial to ask candidates whether there is anything they would actually like to write about.

On a practical note, centres might like to take advantage of the possibility of allowing candidates to word-process their work. Markers constantly comment on the difficulties of reading some candidates’ handwriting.

There are specific linguistic issues — the spelling of common words like *ayudar* and *aburrido*, and confusion between *mi / me*, definite and indefinite articles, imperfect and preterite tenses, the use of the verb *gustar*, and the ubiquitous *bien*.

Where colloquial phrases are used, it is essential that candidates understand that they are writing and therefore use them appropriately. Too often these items sit very uncomfortably in average pieces of work.

Finally, centres must ensure that materials which may be required for evidentiary purposes accurately reflect the demands of the Course. Prelim papers must contain the correct number of supported marks, the 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 comprised of continuous prose (lists, eg recipe ingredients, place names, etc, are not suitable).

Most importantly, the level of demand must be appropriate. Stimuli should be of adequate length, and answers in Spanish are not acceptable (*fiesta*, *paella*, *chorizo*, etc). For further guidance on this, centres should consult the specimen and past papers available on the SQA website.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	3299
Number of resulted entries in 2010	3007

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	18.4%
Grade 2	25.6%
Grade 3	26.3%
Grade 4	19.3%
Grade 5	7.2%
Grade 6	1.8%
Grade 7	0.1%
No award	1.3%

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	16	11	32	19	13	33	21	16
L	25	17	12	26	15	12	27	17	11