

## Principal Assessor Report 2005

**Assessment Panel:**

**Modern Languages**

**Qualification area**

**Subject(s) and Level(s)  
Included in this report**

**Spanish Intermediate 2**

## Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	737
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	732
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### General comments re resulted entry numbers

A slight increase in overall presentations with a drop in the percentage numbers of S4 candidates, almost identical presentations for S5/6 candidates and an increase in FE candidates.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 100	-	-	-	-
A	54.1	54.1	396	74
B	16.8	70.9	123	64
C	15.7	86.6	115	54
D	5.2	91.8	38	49
No award	8.2	100.0	60	-

### General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

### Comments on any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

The Grade boundaries for Lower A, B and C were set at 74, 64 and 54 the profile of the candidate cohort in 2005 being considered similar to that of 2004. The reading passage was considered easier than previous years. Even with this change in boundaries, there was an increase in the number of A awards and awards at A-C from 2004.

## **Comments on candidate performance**

### **General comments**

Overall most candidates performed well in all sections of the exam. It was very pleasing to see how candidates are coping with all areas of the exam. This reflects the good practice of centres where teaching staff too are more aware of the demands and requirements of the examination. Candidates performed particularly well in the Reading and Writing papers and the Speaking test. Paper 2 Listening proved to be the most testing, with a mean mark of 11.8 out of 20.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well**

Candidates coped well with Paper 1 Reading, and in particular with question 4 which can traditionally present problems. The mean mark for this section was 23.1 out of 30. There were pleasing examples of writing too, the mean mark being 15 out of 20 and excellently prepared speaking tests with an average mark of 23.5 out of 30.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

There was no evidence of particular wording of questions causing concern and all marking keys worked well. Paper 2 Listening proved the most difficult with a mean mark of 11.8 out of 20. However this is by no means a disaster in what is accepted as the most demanding part of the examination.

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

Please see above!

Paper 1 Reading. Candidates generally coped well with all 4 questions. Some candidates, particularly younger ones, did not answer with sufficient detail. There was no evidence of candidates lacking time to complete questions, as was the case in previous years. English expression generally good.

Paper 2 Listening. Very balanced paper with candidates generally performing well. Mean mark down on last year but comparable with 2004. Some candidates again lost marks due to incomplete answers.

Paper 3 Writing. There were many examples of essays in the Good and Very Good categories and most candidates seem better prepared than ever for this section of the exam. Candidates should aim to address all bullet points in a full and balanced way. There are still too many examples of candidates addressing the first three well, and the last two in a minimalist way. There are examples too of bad grammar and dictionary use when candidates try to stray from their learned material. Practice in forming questions asking about the job would be helpful to lots of candidates.

Speaking. Again continued improvement in this section, with further improvement in mean mark.