



External Assessment Report 2014

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| Subject(s) | Spanish |
| Level(s) | Intermediate 1 |

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 decrease in the number of candidates from 1006 in 2013 to 309 in 2014. Over 70% of the cohort was S5/6 compared with some 20% in 2013. The mean marks for each component, with the 2013 marks in brackets, were:

Reading 23.1 out of 35 (19.1)

Listening 13.0 out of 20 (12.7)

Writing 9.5 out of 15 (8.5)

Speaking 25.4 out of 30 (24.0)

Feedback from Markers and Examiners was very positive. The Reading and Listening papers were deemed to be appropriate in terms of content and level of difficulty, and they clearly related to the prescribed themes and topics for this level. The wording of questions was considered to be very clear and fair. Most candidates were presented at the appropriate level, with results indicating a very well prepared and able cohort. Candidates and their centres are to be congratulated on this.

The **Reading** passages dealt with an exchange visit to Madrid, leisure activities near Madrid, a website for a language school, and a blog about someone's experience on the language course and his resulting employment. **Listening** contained the required mixture of transactional and personal topics, which included pastimes and hobbies, seasons, holidays, places in town and directions, transport, jobs, personal information, times, nationalities and food. Candidates performed very well in both papers.

Overall candidates coped admirably with the **Writing** paper, which does not change from year to year.

Speaking marks this year were at an all-time high.

Markers commented that all Marking Instructions worked well, and were clear and straightforward.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates performed well in all parts of the examination.

All questions in the **Reading** paper were completed by most, indicating that lack of time was not an issue. Markers commented that candidates showed a better understanding of basic vocabulary, such as days of the week, numbers and months of the year. All four questions were well done, although there were some sections in each which proved problematic for some.

The performance in **Listening** was very solid and almost all candidates gained at least half marks and were well prepared for this paper. Again most candidates coped with the

demands of the task and attempted all questions. Questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 8 and 9 were done particularly well. There were many exceptional performances in this paper.

In **Writing**, there were numerous examples of Very Good performances, with candidates going far beyond the demands of the task, and using complex sentences and a variety of tenses more akin at times to Intermediate 2 or Higher.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

In Question 2(c) *zonas de recreo* and *parques infantiles* caused problems for some, *recreo* being translated as 'break' and *infantiles* as 'infants'.

In Question 3(e), which was a gap-fill question, *Para informarte más, puedes llamarnos a la oficina o rellenar la hoja de información* both of these possibilities were at times mistranslated or not enough detail was given.

In Question 4(g)(ii) *ya que el trabajo consiste en vender sus productos por teléfono*, not enough detail was given in many answers to achieve the mark. Finally, in Question 4(i) *Si hace buen tiempo voy allí a pie, pero si me levanto tarde, cojo el autobús* the word *tarde* was often rendered as afternoon rather than late.

Listening

Question 4(a) *está situado cerca de la cathedral*, Question 5 *aparcar el coche* and *es a pie*, Question 7 the adjectives of personality *paciente y simpática* caused problems for some; and in Question 10 *Lo pasamos fenomenal* was not understood by many candidates.

Writing

There was some other-tongue interference from some candidates, and some less able candidates struggled with verbs, adjectival agreements and gender of nouns, and also with the last section of the Writing. Markers noted some basic errors even in the first section eg *Me llamo es*.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Centres should encourage candidates to pay attention to detail and accuracy. Marking Instructions for Reading and Listening, and the Writing Pegged Mark Criteria, are available on the SQA website and show the type of detail required for answers. It is recommended to share these with candidates to show them why particular answers are acceptable or unacceptable.

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.

Reading and Listening

Candidates should carefully read the introductions and the key question words for each question such as Who, What, When or Why etc. They should always be careful and take their time with supported questions, which are not always necessarily easier.

For Reading, 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 examination.

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. Candidates should learn vocabulary for the common areas, such as time, daily routine, numbers, weather, colours, jobs and careers, places in town, directions, sports and pastimes and food and drink, common adverbs, prepositions, and key question words and adjectives. These are recurring areas in the Reading and Listening papers each year.

For Reading and Listening, candidates must be aware that detailed answers are required and that quite often a one-word answer will not be enough at this level.

Please stress to candidates that in Reading and Listening 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 answer is correct.

Lack of care can mean that marks are lost for simple things like easy numbers.

Writing

Candidates should be encouraged to use their dictionary in Writing only to check up spelling and accents.

Candidates should be encouraged to use a greater range of verbs in Section 1 *Familia*, instead of relying too much on *Tengo*, which is sometimes the only verb used here. For example, occupations and personalities could be included.

Exemplification of Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Good and Very Good Writing tasks for Intermediate 1, with Examiner commentaries based on the Extended Pegged Mark Descriptors, are available on the SQA Secure website. 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.

Statistical information: update on Courses

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|------------------------------------|------|
| Number of resulted entries in 2013 | 1006 |
| Number of resulted entries in 2014 | 309 |

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 | 57.3% | 57.3% | 177 | 69 |
| B | 18.1% | 75.4% | 56 | 59 |
| C | 13.3% | 88.7% | 41 | 49 |
| D | 5.5% | 94.2% | 17 | 44 |
| No award | 5.8% | - | 18 | - |

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.