



## External Assessment Report 2015

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

In this the last year of Intermediate 1, there were only 36 candidates from nine centres presented, compared with 309 in 2014 and 1006 in 2013. This drop due to the number of candidates following National 4 and National 5 Courses in Spanish. 93% of candidates were either S5 or S6, with only two candidates from S4 presented.

The mean marks for each component (with the 2014 marks in brackets) were:

- ◆ Reading 20.1 out of 35 (23.1)
- ◆ Listening 10.6 out of 20 (13.0)
- ◆ Writing 7.8 out of 15 (9.5)
- ◆ Speaking 26.3 out of 30 (25.4)

It is difficult to analyse statistics with such a small cohort, but the average percentage mark for 2015 was 64.8% compared with 71% in 2014. There was a drop in average marks in the Reading, Listening and Writing papers, although the Speaking mark was higher than ever. Three candidates achieved an Upper A, and a further 12 a lower A. A further five received a B award and seven achieved a C — 27 candidates received grades A to C with one D and 8 no awards. The highest mark achieved in the exam was 95% by one candidate.

Centres and candidates are to be praised for their hard work in preparation for the examination.

Feedback from the marking team was generally positive and they commented that both the Reading and Listening papers were very fair, were of the appropriate level of difficulty and related to the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1. Most candidates were presented at the correct level although perhaps a handful did struggle with parts of the paper and in particular the Writing paper. There were no issues with any of the question papers and the standard of the papers was deemed to be of the same level as 2014. Markers commented that all marking instructions were clear and straightforward, and there were no areas of concern with any of the questions in any of the papers.

With this in mind, the grade boundary for a C was set at 49, 59 for a B, 69 for an A and 84 for an upper A, the same grade boundaries as in 2014.

The **Reading** paper concerned a combined holiday with work experience in Spain, voluntary work, a language academy and activities and visits in Santiago de Compostela.

The **Listening** paper contained the required mixture of transactional and personal topics, namely age, directions and places in town, jobs and careers, days of the week, daily routine, personal characteristics and information, food and drink, time, pastimes and likes and dislikes.

The **Writing** paper is of course the same each year.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

As shown by the awards, most candidates performed well in the examination. Centres and their candidates are to be congratulated on this.

There were some very good performances in the Reading paper and in particular the supported question, namely questions 1(a), 2(b), 3(d) and 4(c). Most candidates demonstrated sound understanding of the four passages and the answers to all four were completed by most candidates.

Questions 1–6 were done better than the questions in the second half of the **Listening** test.

In the **Writing** paper over half of the candidates achieved Satisfactory or above and there were some very good performances.

The **Speaking** marks were the best ever and demonstrated that candidates were well prepared for the internally assessed part of the award.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

In the **Reading** paper timing was an issue for a few candidates who did not manage to complete question 4 or whose answers to question 4 were minimal. Centres must be confident that their candidates have had sufficient practice in coping with four Reading texts in the 45 minutes allocated to this task in the exam.

In questions 4(a) and 4(b)(i) some candidates did not give sufficient detail in their answers, although 'Give details' was contained in the questions. Questions 4 (d)(i), (ii) and (iii) proved difficult for many with *taller de cocina española*, *tuvimos que ir al mercado para comprar el pan*, *el pescado y las verduras* and *porque los dueños de los puestos eran muy charlatanes* causing difficulties. In question 4(c) some candidates translated *martes* as Monday.

In **Listening**, some candidates showed minimal knowledge of food vocabulary and prepositions and this may be linked to lack of coverage in centres. In question 5(a), which was supported with tick boxes, some candidates did not recognise *un yogur de fresas y una taza de café solo*. In 5(b) 'What does she not like to eat? Mention any **one** thing', some candidates did not recognise *salchichas* or *huevos fritos*.

In question 6 some candidates did not know *delante de*.

In question 8, *a las siete* was not picked up by some and in question 10 *se puede alquilar bicicletas* and *es bastante barato* were not translated well.

In the **Writing** it must be noted that most candidates achieved Satisfactory or better. However, some responses were quite pedestrian with a repetitive use of the same verbs, such as *tengo* and *hay*. In a couple of centres every candidate produced more or less the same response, with virtually no personalised content, apart from family names in the first section.

The Writing task seemed outwith the capabilities of just two or three candidates who did not complete all sections. Serious misuse of dictionary and literal translation from English were

issues. 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.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	309
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	36
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## 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	41.7%	41.7%	15	69
B	13.9%	55.6%	5	59
C	19.4%	75.0%	7	49
D	2.8%	77.8%	1	44
No award	22.2%	-	8	-

For this Course, grade boundaries have been stable for a number of years and the intention was to set similar grade boundaries to previous years. The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

## 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.