



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Spanish
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

The number of candidates in 2014 was 971, which is less than half the 2,056 who sat the examination in 2013. Less than half the candidature was from S3/4 in 2014, compared to over 70% in 2013. The mean marks for each component, with the 2013 marks in brackets, were:

Reading 20.5 out of 30 (20.4)

Listening 14.7 out of 20 (13.4)

Writing 14.1 out of 20 (15.4)

Speaking 25.3 out of 30 (25.0)

Centres are to be congratulated in preparing their candidates so well for this examination as are candidates overall for their excellent performance in what was considered to be a very fair yet robust examination.

The three shorter **Reading** passages dealt with the results of a survey on women's lifestyles, with social networking in Spain, and with a Spanish footballer and his role as a UN Goodwill Ambassador. The longer passage dealt with opinions on shopping at the sales. Markers commented that these were a nice range of contemporary and relevant texts which candidates could relate to easily. The three **Listening** items covered life in the city of Granada, a young man's ideas on healthy living and a young lady talking about her part-time job. The **Writing** advertised a job as a hotel receptionist.

Markers commented positively on a balanced examination at the appropriate level for Intermediate 2. All questions were clearly worded and Marking Instructions were clear and worked well.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates coped well with all the components of the examination, as evidenced by the very high attainment of most at the top grades and by the overall pass rate.

In **Reading**, most candidates coped comfortably with the paper. Questions 1 and 2 and most of Question 3 were done particularly well. Very few candidates scored less than half marks for the paper.

The **Listening** paper was considered to be fairly straightforward, covering the syllabus taught in class, and most candidates did well. Candidates dealt successfully with most parts of all three questions, most notably in Question 1.

In **Writing**, there were many excellent performances, with many demonstrating the content, accuracy and variety of language required of a Very Good performance. Very few candidates seemed out of their depth in this exercise. Some markers remarked that the job title applied for, *receptionista para trabajar en la recepción de nuestro hotel*, was perhaps

easier to understand than in previous years, and for this reason fewer candidates were applying for the 'wrong' job. It was particularly good to see many centres encouraging their candidates to write personalised applications rather than template type letters.

Markers also noted that quite a few candidates expanded on the optional bullet points, namely any previous links to Spain and work experience, which added to the overall quality of the application.

Overall the standard achieved in this year's examination was highly satisfactory and centres and candidates are to be commended on this.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Reading

In **Reading**, markers commented that poor command of English or failing to write enough detail sometimes led to a loss of marks. For example, in Question 2(b) *son una manera práctica de informar a amigos de las novedades de su vida* ('they are a practical way of informing friends of their news'), quite often the word 'practical' or 'useful' was missing from answers.

Candidates found Question 4(b)(ii) particularly challenging as it required detail for the two marks on offer. *Estas suelen ser ideales porque son una excelente oportunidad para obtener productos de marca a precios muy razonables. Además la ropa de verano no pasa de moda muy rápidamente* 'to get designer clothes at a reasonable price/summer clothes do not go out of fashion quickly'.

In Question 4(c)(iii) the word 'very' was required for the mark in the answer 'she gets up very early' *me levanto muy temprano*.

### Listening

Again in the Listening paper, some candidates did not give the required details in their answers to gain the marks on offer.

In Question 1(d) the word 'very' is required from *los dos son muy bonitos*.

In Question 2(c) *como verduras, pescado, carne y mucha fruta*. A few candidates did not read the question properly and mentioned only two things.

In Question 3(a) there were two pieces of information required for the one mark: *para ahorrar algo de dinero para las vacaciones de verano* 'to save money for her summer holidays'.

Finally in Question 3(c), for the second possible answer, candidates often did not include 'two' days of 'and she would have to work two days during the week' *y además dos días entre semana*.

## **Writing**

In Writing, the only area which some candidates did not deal with well was the fifth bullet point 'request for information about the job', where some only made one statement such as *quisiera más información sobre el puesto* or just asked a couple of inaccurate questions.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

The vast majority of candidates performed well in all components of the examination and there were very few poor performances. However, there are always areas of possible improvement which can be highlighted.

### **Reading and Listening**

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 Listening, where candidates are not allowed the use of a dictionary.

In preparation for the Reading paper, centres must ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice in tackling the four questions in the 1 hour and 10 minutes allocated, and that they also have had sufficient practice in reading longer texts similar in length to those of Question 4.

Candidates should read over all their answers to ensure that they make sense and that their English expression is clear.

In Listening, candidates should be ready to use the built-in minute before each of the three Listening texts to study the questions for that item. This can help candidates anticipate possible answers.

### **Writing**

Candidates should be aware of the need to address all compulsory bullet points in a more balanced way. Far too often the final bullet requesting information is tackled by just one or two questions or a single statement. Less able candidates who struggle to memorise material should probably be encouraged to focus solely on these five and perhaps not attempt the optional bullet points.

A personalised application may result in a more interesting and meaningful essay. Candidates should also be discouraged from writing long lists of school subjects.

When writing in Spanish, candidates should make sure that they thoroughly check over their work for accents, spelling and grammatical accuracy.

## **General**

Candidates should try to present their work as neatly as possible.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	2056
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	971
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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	60.1%	60.1%	584	71
B	19.9%	80.0%	193	61
C	12.2%	92.2%	118	51
D	3.4%	95.6%	33	46
No award	4.4%	-	43	-

## 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.