



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Spanish
Level	Intermediate 1

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

There was again a considerable and welcome increase in the number of presentations at Intermediate 1 Spanish from 855 in 2010 to 960 in 2011, from a total of 101 centres. The mean marks for each component were:

- ◆ Paper 1 Reading 20.4 out of 35 (19.8 in 2010)
- ◆ Paper 2 Listening 11.2 out of 20 (10.0 in 2010)
- ◆ Paper 3 Writing 8.9 out of 15 (9.1. in 2010)
- ◆ Speaking 25 out of 30 (25.2 last year)
- ◆ Overall 65.5% (64.1% last year)

These marks are very pleasing and give evidence of a well prepared and able cohort presented at the appropriate level. The examination was considered to be appropriate in terms of content and demand at this level, and related clearly to the teaching syllabus as outlined in the prescribed themes and topics of Intermediate 1.

Candidates generally coped well with all of the components. However, although there is an improvement on last year in the Listening marks, the average mark is just over half marks, despite candidates hearing each utterance three times. This is one area where candidates still need practice, although the slight improvement on 2010 is welcome.

There was a sizeable rise in the number of S3 candidates, from 9.7% last year to 15% in 2011, and these candidates generally performed well. The percentage of S4, S5 and S6 candidates was very similar to previous years, but there was a big drop in numbers in the FE sector from 10.2 % to 4.7%.

Markers commented that the content of all papers and the marking instructions were appropriate to the level and were fair to all candidates. Any feedback received from centres was of a positive nature.

The Grade Boundaries for this year were set at the same levels as last year, namely 84% for an Upper A, 69% for an A, 59% for a B and 49% for a C award. This resulted in 44.5% of candidates received an A award, 20.5 a B, and 19.7% a C.

7% of candidates received a D, and 8.5% (or 82 out of 960) received a No award.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates coped well with all the components of the examination as evidenced by the improvement in the mean mark in Listening and Reading from 2010, and by the marginally lower marks in Writing and Speaking.

The Reading Paper was of the normal format of four passages (two shorter and two longer). One was about a travel card for young people, one about the city of Salamanca, one was about a language school, and the final one was about young people's experiences in language schools in different cities in Spain. These were all generally well tackled. Candidates generally found the paper accessible and made a good attempt at all questions, and according to one marker, "seemed to enjoy the process and the topics".

In Listening, candidates attempted all questions and there were very few blanks. Most supported questions were done well, and there was a range of performance, with some candidates scoring highly. As usual there were five personal language items (dealing with age, numbers, personality, home, food and drink, household tasks and daily routine, weather and leisure), and five transactional ones, which included the vocabulary of tourist information, buying food and quantities, directions, travel and transport, directions and prepositions.

In Writing there were many exemplary pieces, where candidates produced flawless, detailed responses, using quite sophisticated language even going beyond the criteria for a mark of 15. There were many Very Good and Good performances in this area. It was noted by markers that very few candidates were penalised for failing to write at least three sentences under each of the four headings.

Areas which candidates found demanding

This section must begin by stating that the vast majority of candidates performed well in all components of the examination and were well prepared by their centres, and that there were very few poor performances. However, there are always areas of possible improvement which can be highlighted.

In Reading, all four questions were well done, but candidates lost marks due to lack of attention to detail eg:

- ◆ Q2(e): What is Salamanca ideal for? *para encontrar a españoles de tu edad*. Many candidates missed out 'of your age'
- ◆ Q3(f): What activities are on offer? Give details of **one** activity. ...*fiestas de bienvenida y despedida*. Both welcome **and** farewell parties were required for the mark.'
- ◆ 4(a) (ii) When did she arrive in Salamanca? Many candidates missed out the **a finales de junio** 'at the end of', from their answer.
- ◆ Q 4(g) What service does the school offer? many candidates did not include in their answer the 'free' of *un servicio de transporte gratuito*.
- ◆ In Q3(b) many candidates described the school's facilities rather than answer the question, which was 'What does the article say about when the school is open?'
- ◆ In 4b(i): very few candidates gave a correct rendering of *Lo pasé muy bien con mis compañeros de piso*.

In Listening, some candidates were weak on numbers, with *quinientos* in Q7 rendered as 15 or 50. In Q9(a): *Plaza mayor* was not understood by many; Q9(b): *viernes por la tarde* many candidates got the day of the week wrong and did not recognise *tarde*. In Q10(a) very few candidates understood *merienda en el campo* with 'campo' often rendered as camping.

There were some candidates who had not properly prepared for the Writing, for whom the task was beyond their ability, and who could not produce the required number of sentences for each of the four areas. Some candidates used parts of headings to start their answers, such as *Donde lives en Glasgow, pasatiempos fútbol y baloncesto*.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As indicated earlier, there is ample evidence that centres are preparing their candidates well for the Intermediate 1 Spanish exam, and both centres and their candidates are to be congratulated on this.

Reading and Listening

- ◆ There is evidence of a need for more rigorous training in listening skills and practice at Intermediate 1 level. The listening paper will always contain a mixture of short utterances, using both personal and transactional language. It is important that candidates know the vocabulary as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1, especially basic areas such as daily routine, numbers, weather, colours, clothes and prices, sports and pastimes, food, and drink, jobs and careers, places in town, directions, common adverbs, prepositions, question words and adjectives.
- ◆ Please stress to candidates that 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 one is correct.

Writing

- ◆ The Writing paper is unchanged from year to year. It is important that all candidates have prepared properly for it to the best of their ability
- ◆ Less able candidates should maybe concentrate on only three correct sentences for each area, but in saying this they should still try to vary the verbs used, eg for Area 1 Familia: *Me llamo John. En mi familia hay tres personas, mi madre, mi hermana y yo. Mi madre es enfermera.*
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to use their dictionary in writing only to check up spelling and accents for this exercise — which they have, after all, been preparing all session.

General

- ◆ 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 should again 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, and ensure that in listening, all rough notes are crossed out.
- ◆ Candidates should, in the course of their studies, be encouraged to go onto the SQA website and look at marking keys, Writing GRC, and External Assessment Reports. This will help them to gauge what is required of them when it comes to sitting the examination. These can also be discussed in class with their teacher/lecturer.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	899
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	995
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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	41.2%	41.2%	410	69
B	18.2%	59.4%	181	59
C	17.5%	76.9%	174	49
D	6.6%	83.5%	66	44
No award	16.5%	100.0%	164	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.