



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Spanish</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 2</b>

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

Presentation numbers were down marginally from last year, with 1,423 candidates this year as opposed to 1,438 in 2010. 155 centres presented candidates for Intermediate 2 Spanish.

Almost 55% of candidates were S4 (which was an increase from 2010), around 40% S5/6, and the remainder FE students. 56.9% of candidates achieved an A award and a further 20.4 % a B, meaning that over 77% of candidates achieved a B or better. This indicates a commendable performance by a strong and able cohort who had been presented at the appropriate level.

91.1% of candidates were awarded Grade A–C and 8.9% (or 126) candidates a Grade D or No Award. One candidate achieved 100%.

The content of the examination related clearly to the teaching syllabus, as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 2, and was of an appropriate level of difficulty. The examination was well received by centres. Feedback from markers indicated that the reading texts and listening were accessible and of relevance to candidates, and that the overall response of candidates was good. Marking instructions were deemed to be very clear and fair.

The mean mark for each component was:

- ◆ Reading 19.2 out of 30 (19.6 in 2010)
- ◆ Listening 11.7 out of 20 (12.7 in 2010)
- ◆ Writing 14.2 out of 20 (14.9 in 2010)
- ◆ Speaking 24.6 out 30 (24.4 in 2010)

The Reading, Writing and Speaking averages were very similar to 2010, and there was a drop of 1% in the Listening despite, for the first time this year (as opposed to twice in previous years), candidates hearing the stimulus three times.

Overall, the average mean mark for the examination was 69.7%, and the performance of candidates was of a high level. The grade boundary was set at the same level as 2010, namely 48% for a C, 58% for a B and 68 for an A and 83 for an Upper A.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates dealt well with the three shorter passages in the Reading Paper. These dealt with sharing a room, online holiday booking, and young entrepreneurs. The longer passage dealt with beach regulations on the Costa del Sol, and it was pleasing to note that most candidates managed to complete the paper, although Question 4 did prove to be quite challenging for some. Markers commented that most students made a good attempt at answering all questions.

The Listening paper dealt with the three topics of family life, future plans and summer holidays. Many candidates scored highly in this with many achieving full marks, although there was a range of performance. However, there was a slightly poorer response overall in Listening in 2011, as compared to previous years.

The Writing paper was a job application for traveller assistance or *ayudante (en el equipo de asistencia a viajeros y turistas)* in Malaga airport. Here there were some very good performances, with many candidates achieving full marks. Many candidates wrote at length and with a high degree of accuracy and flair, using a range and variety of structures. Often applications were highly personalised and addressed the particular requirements of the 'job' really well. Most candidates successfully covered the five compulsory bullet points. Candidates were generally well prepared for this component, and there were few Unsatisfactory, and ever fewer Poor, performances in Writing in 2011

The high attainment in Speaking also testified to an able and well prepared cohort.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

It must be reiterated that candidates and their teachers/lecturers in centres can feel justifiably proud overall of candidate achievement in Intermediate 2 Spanish in 2011. Except for a few poor performances in Listening, and even fewer in Writing, candidates generally coped well with the demands of the examination.

In Reading, some candidates did not write enough detail to be awarded the mark, particularly in Q4. In Q3 (a) many candidates did not grasp the concept of the comparative/superlative *más grandes* in *las compañías más grandes de España*, often translating it as big or large. Q3(d) was 'What will the winners learn?' *Aprenderán cómo es el trabajo a los mandos de una compañía internacional*. Many candidates could not get the concept of 'in charge of' or 'in control of'. Q4(e)(i): several candidates missed out the *sin utilizar* in their answers *tiene prohibido dejar la sombrilla y hamaca sin utilizar más de dos horas* and wrongly put 'using your lounge or parasol for two hours'.

Many markers noted that there was evidence of poor English expression in Q4. This was perhaps partly caused by misuse of dictionary and candidates being in a rush to get the paper finished.

In Listening the average mark of 11.7 out of 20 was the lowest in the past four years, despite candidates hearing each of the sections three times, and this was disappointing. Listening is the weakest skill for candidates, and it is vital that candidates get plenty of practice in this area. The Listening exam should be accessible to all candidates but it is evident that many of them do not recognise basic vocabulary when listening. In question 1, many candidates mistranslated *médico* and missed the *italiano* of *un restaurante italiano*, thus giving an incomplete answer. Question 3 was generally poorly done, although the vocabulary was relatively straightforward. In Q3(a) many candidates did not understand the *a principios* of *a principios de agosto* and just put August as their answer, again an incomplete answer. Many did not understand *preciosa* of *la ciudad es preciosa* in Q3(b)(i), nor did they understand *un hotel barato*, nor *está lejos del centro* in 3(b)(ii) and 3(c) respectively.

In Writing, there were occasions where candidates were clearly ill-prepared. Candidates should be aware that the job they are applying for will be in bold type in the advert. Some candidates also included details of what there is in their town, details of the school day and school uniform, which have absolutely no place in a job application. There is still evidence of candidates applying for the wrong job.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

### Reading and Listening

- ◆ Centres should continue to emphasise that candidates must give **full** and **detailed** answers, but be equally guided by the number of points allocated to each answer. Normally this is also highlighted after the question by something like *Mention **one** thing* or *Give **two** details*.
- ◆ In Reading, it is important that candidates take account of the introduction to each of the questions, which will give them the context of the item, rather than just answering the questions.
- ◆ 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 the Listening test, where candidates do not have access to a dictionary.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ There is evidence of a need for more rigorous training in listening skills and practice at Intermediate 2 level.

### Writing

- ◆ Candidates should address the five compulsory bullet points in a balanced way.
- ◆ More time could be spent by candidates to ensure that they understand the actual job they are applying for. Candidates should be aware that the job they are applying for will be in bold type in the advert. This will be followed by a brief descriptor of the requirements of the job.
- ◆ Less able candidates who struggle to memorise material should probably be encouraged to focus solely on the five compulsory bullet points and not to attempt the optional bullet points.

### 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**. The dictionary should only really be used to check in writing for checking spelling and accents. In addition, candidates should try to present their work as neatly as possible.
- ◆ 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. Likewise teachers/lecturers could carry out this exercise with candidates in class.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	1477
------------------------------------	------

Number of resulted entries in 2011	1447
------------------------------------	------

## 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	55.3%	55.3%	800	68
B	20.0%	75.3%	289	58
C	13.6%	88.9%	197	48
D	3.9%	92.8%	57	43
No award	7.2%	100.0%	104	-

## **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.