



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Spanish
Level	Standard Grade

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

This year saw a significant increase in the number of candidates presented for the examination (from 3016 to 3462). This was made up of a combination of second language candidates and an increase in the number of centres presenting Spanish as their main first language. Overall the cohort would seem to be slightly less able than last year's.

There was a 0.5% reduction in the numbers achieving Grade 1 (compared to 2010), and a similar small decrease at Grade 2. There was an overall reduction of just under 1% in the numbers achieving a Credit award. The downward trend continued at General level, with fewer candidates achieving Grades 3 and 4. The cumulative total of Grades 1–4 is therefore down from 88.8% in 2010 to 86.1% in 2011. It follows that there is an increase at Grades 5 and 6 (Grade 5 shows an increase of 2.2% and Grade 6 a 0.1% increase.)

The directly-graded elements of Speaking and Writing gave matching results. Grades 1 and 2 in Speaking showed a reduction of 1.9% on last year, with a corresponding 1.5% reduction in Writing. At Grades 1–4 results were 1.3% down in Writing and a negligible 0.4% in Speaking. In both elements, the numbers achieving Grades 1–6 were virtually identical to last year.

At Credit level there was a distinct contrast between Reading and Listening — essentially, Reading was well done and Listening was not. While 19.7% achieved a Grade 1 in Reading, only 10.8% achieved the same in Listening, with a similar discrepancy at Grades 1 and 2 combined (39.6% compared to 26.2%). At the same time, markers reported that at General level both elements proved difficult for candidates. Cumulatively 86.2% in Reading and 77.6% in Listening achieved Grades 1–4. Reading and Listening were both well done at Foundation level, giving overall totals of 97.1% Grades 1–6 in Reading and 96% Grades 1–6 in Listening.

To summarise — the evidence points to this group of candidates being slightly less able than the 2010 cohort, although there were some outstanding performances in all elements.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers were in general agreement that preparation of the folios was good. They were happy that the vast majority of candidates managed to produce three reasonable pieces of work. It should be said that there were a number of outstanding performances in writing, particularly where candidates were given the opportunity to express their own opinions. 'Personal' essays are almost always much better than those produced by the use of a template.

Credit Reading was well done by a lot of candidates — a number of those achieving a Grade 1 scored over 20 from a possible 26, and there were a few who scored full marks. It was also very encouraging that very few candidates omitted questions. The vast majority of

candidates attempted everything, indicating that some work has been done on the timing of the examination.

Foundation Listening and Reading were both well done. Candidates are clearly comfortable with short stimuli and supported questions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

General Reading

Question 1 was poorly done — candidates were clearly confused by the amount of language and were unable to focus on the section required for the answer.

Question 3(a) was very badly done. It was disappointing that so many candidates failed to recognise 'el dibujo'.

Question 10 was problematic for many. The text was fairly lengthy, and candidates had difficulty in homing in on the correct section for each answer. Part (c) in particular was very badly done, and there were problems with English expression.

Question 11: Given that candidates had seven pieces of advice from which to choose three, results were disappointing. Specific items of vocabulary such as 'prontito', 'la tarde', 'última hora' and 'relajada' caused excessive problems.

Listening

As always, candidates found it difficult to cope with listening. Centres should ensure adequate preparation for this skill. Specific areas of difficulty are listed below:

Foundation

Questions 3, 6, 8: Candidates failed to recognise very simple vocabulary (weather, fruits, etc).

General

Question 2(b): Very few candidates managed to recognise directions.

Question 4(a): It was surprising that so few candidates understood the question '¿Qué hora es?'

Question 8: Nationalities/countries could be considered as fairly basic items yet many candidates were unable to recognise them

Question 11: A large number of candidates were limiting themselves to one word answers.

Credit

Question 1 was very poorly done, with the vast majority of candidates failing to recognise the word 'reloj'.

Question 6 was badly done. Very few candidates recognised 'bandera roja', and there was a surprising range of incorrect, if imaginative, responses.

Question 8(a): Many candidates failed to recognise 'colegio' as being a school.

Question 9: Lack of accuracy when giving details led to many candidates losing marks. There was a particular issue with extraneous material.

Question 10: Failure to recognise 'alojamiento' and 'agencia' led to errors.

Question 11(a) depended to some extent on correct verb tenses and was poorly done.

Question 11(b): Very few candidates recognised 'dirección', and those who did often failed to include the second part of the answer 'número de teléfono'

Markers highlighted that more attention to basic vocabulary and exam technique is required.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Centres should impress on candidates that there are no trick questions. If answers appear obvious, it is because they are. There is no need for complicated responses to simple questions.
- ◆ The importance of reading questions carefully cannot be over-emphasised, including the instructions at the top of the page. On too many occasions candidates do not take account of the 'situation' described as a background to the texts, or assume that answers are contained in photographs or graphics!
- ◆ Similarly, candidates should always take the time to read over their answers to ensure that their responses actually make sense.
- ◆ Listening practice is imperative — some candidates are not aware of the technique of listening for specific types of information, and allow themselves to be confused by the amount of language contained in stimuli.
- ◆ Much of the vocabulary being tested is very basic — numbers, food, clothing, school subjects, weather, family, etc — and centres should take every opportunity to reinforce it.
- ◆ Centres should reinforce the extraneous rule. Compared to last year, more marks were lost to this.
- ◆ In Writing, it is important that the tasks and topics chosen should be appropriate to the level of ability of the individual. Too many centres are adopting a 'one size fits all' approach. For example, dialogues and letters will not provide the best platform for more able candidates to expand on their own ideas, while issues such as the relative merits of town and country are not necessarily within the range of less able pupils.
- ◆ Centres should be aware that a wider range of topics might well be undertaken — although school, holidays and home town are perfectly valid, a wider view might provide candidates with a more stimulating experience of language learning.
- ◆ Centres should remember that length of essays does not guarantee a good grade. Too many candidates are including long lists of vocabulary (clothes, school subjects, rooms in house, etc) in the mistaken belief that the most important element in writing is the number of words.
- ◆ On a practical note, centres might like to take advantage of the possibility of allowing candidates to word-process their work. Markers constantly comment on the difficulties of reading some candidates' handwriting.

- ◆ There are specific linguistic issues — the spelling of common words like ‘ayudar’, ‘aburrido’ and confusion between ‘mi/me’, definite and indefinite articles, imperfect and preterite tenses, the use of the verb ‘gustar,’ and the ubiquitous ‘bien’!
- ◆ As always, the use of accents is problematic. Although candidates are not specifically penalised on every occasion of misuse, where verb tenses are involved there will be difficulties.
- ◆ Although there is a general principle that 1 mark equals 1 piece of information, centres should be aware that where very basic vocabulary is involved (eg ‘arte e historia’, ‘pantalones cortos y una camiseta’), particularly at Credit Level, more than one item may be required to gain the mark.
- ◆ Finally, centres must ensure that materials which may be required for evidentiary purposes accurately reflect the demands of the course. Prelim papers must contain the correct number of supported marks; total marks for papers should match the final exam; there must be at least one question on the world of work at every level in Reading; and reading texts must be composed of continuous prose (lists eg recipe ingredients, place-names, etc are not suitable). Most importantly, the level of demand must be appropriate — stimuli should be of adequate length, answers in Spanish are not acceptable (‘fiesta’, ‘paella’, ‘chorizo’, etc). For further guidance on this, centres should consult the specimen papers available on the SQA website.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Standard Grade

Number of resulted entries in 2010	3007
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	3439
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	17.7%
Grade 2	25.6%
Grade 3	25.3%
Grade 4	18.1%
Grade 5	9.2%
Grade 6	1.9%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	2.1%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assess-able Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Found-ation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	26	18	13	32	19	13	33	21	16
L	25	15	10	26	14	11	27	16	10