



## External Assessment Report 2015

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

In this the final running of Intermediate 2 Spanish, there were 125 presentations compared with 971 in 2014 and 2056 in 2013. A significant number of candidates followed the National 5 Course in Spanish in 2015. Only 40% of the candidates for Intermediate 2 were S3/4, the rest being made up of S5/6 candidates, indicating perhaps a 'crash course' by many of the latter.

The mean marks for each component, with the 2014 marks in brackets, were as follows:

- ◆ Reading 22.2 out of 30 (20.5)
- ◆ Listening 13.2 out of 20 (14.7)
- ◆ Writing 14.4 out of 20 (14.1)
- ◆ Speaking 26.6 out of 30 (25.3)

All three written papers were very accessible to what was overall a very competent group of candidates. Candidates seemed to engage fully with the content of the papers and showed maturity in their responses. The average mark for Speaking was the highest ever. Feedback from the marking team indicated that the Reading texts and Listening were accessible and of relevance to candidates, and that the overall response of candidates was very good. Marking instructions were deemed to be very clear. The examination was considered to be a very fair yet robust test.

The standard of the papers was considered to be of the same level of difficulty as 2014, and the grade boundary for a C was set at 51%, a B 61%, and an A 71%, an upper A being 86%.

Of the 125 candidates who were presented, an impressive 83 received an A award (43 of whom received an upper A), 17 a B and 16 a C award. There were five D awards, and only five candidates received no award. Candidates and their teachers/lecturers are to be congratulated on their excellent preparation for this examination.

The three shorter **Reading** passages dealt with *El Programa Calderón*, which offers job opportunities, a news item about burglaries in the village of Pedralba, and *La Fundación Cibervoluntarios*, a group of computer enthusiasts who do voluntary work. The longer passage was about *El desierto de los niños*, an expedition offering families a different type of holiday. Markers noted that the paper content was excellent with a good balance of accessible questions and other more challenging ones.

The three questions in the **Listening** paper dealt with pocket money and part-time jobs, free time and hobbies and friendship.

The **Writing** paper consisted of a job application for an English language assistant in a languages academy in Spain.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates in general dealt well with all four passages in the **Reading** paper, with the average mark in the paper higher than previous years. Very few candidates failed to secure a pass in this paper. Candidates seemed to engage fully with the topics in the paper. The most demanding passage (passage 4, worth 15 marks) was done well and the concepts were understood well by most candidates. Markers commented that most candidates made a good attempt at answering all questions.

Many candidates scored highly in the **Listening** paper, although the average mark of 13.2 was down on 2014 but comparable with 2013 and 2012. Some very able candidates achieved full marks, although there was as usual a range of performance.

In the **Writing** paper there were some very good performances with many candidates achieving full marks. There were some impressive and flawless performances. 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 as English language assistant really well.

Some responses would have been more appropriate to Higher in their level of language. Most candidates successfully covered the five compulsory bullet points and it was pleasing to note that quite a few candidates included the additional bullet points as well as the mandatory ones. Candidates were generally very well prepared for this component.

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

The standard achieved in the examination was highly satisfactory and centres and candidates are to be commended on their excellent teaching and learning.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

It must be reiterated that candidates and their teachers/lecturers can feel justifiably proud overall of candidate achievement in Intermediate 2 Spanish in 2015. Except for very few poor performances in Listening and even fewer in Writing, candidates generally coped well with all the demands of the examination.

In **Reading**, only a handful of candidates failed to complete the paper. Questions which led to most wrong answers were:

- ◆ 2(b) 'When do the burglars commit the robberies? Give exact details.' *siempre de lunes a jueves*. Many candidates got their days wrong or just put one day.
- ◆ 3(a) 'For what age group does *La Fundación Cibervoluntarios* organise internet workshops?' *para mayores de sesenta años*. Many candidates failed to translate *mayores de* in their answer.
- ◆ 3 (b) 'What skills will the participants learn in the workshops?' Some candidates omitted 'share' in their answer from *compartir información con otros internautas*.
- ◆ Despite the use of a dictionary, some candidates failed to translate *Marruecos* accurately in 4(b)(i) or failed to include *por el sur de* in their answer to 'Where exactly does it go?'
- ◆ Likewise *setenta* was often mistranslated in 4(b)(iv) 'How many children take part each year?' *alrededor de setenta niños participan*.

In one or two centres candidates were out of their depth and the **Listening** task appeared to be a real challenge for them. Vocabulary coverage at times showed a lack of topics covered, again perhaps due to the fact that some candidates were doing the course in one year. Details in answers were being missed by some. Centres should continue to emphasise that candidates give **full** and **detailed** answers.

In **Listening**, family members were not picked up well, *padre* and *padres*, and *tío* caused problems. Question 1 was done well.

- ◆ In question 2 household chores were not picked up well by some *debo hacer mi cama, tengo que poner la mesa tres días a la semana, tengo que limpiar mi habitación y lavar el coche.*
- ◆ Question 3(c) 'Why does Rubén spend a lot of time in Pedro's house?' *ya que no se lleva bien con su padre* proved difficult for many.
- ◆ Question 3(d) 'What sporting interests do Pedro and Rubén have in common?' Give details of **one** thing. *jugamos en el mismo equipo de baloncesto y somos miembros del mismo club de natación.* Many candidates lacked detail in their answer by just putting basketball or swimming.

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. Very few candidates scored zero by not completing three bullet points. Only one candidate appeared to apply for the incorrect job.

The use of accents was generally inconsistent. Some information was irrelevant to the nature of a job application eg how they got on with their parents and a description of the school uniform.

It is clear that some candidates are not checking over their work for accents, spelling and grammatical accuracy. The dictionary should only really be used in Writing to check for spelling and accents.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	971
Number of resulted entries in 2015	125

## 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	66.4%	66.4%	83	71
B	13.6%	80.0%	17	61
C	12.0%	92.0%	15	51
D	4.0%	96.0%	5	46
No award	4.0%	-	5	-

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.