

External Examiners Report 2013

Spanish - Intermediate 1

General Comments

- There was a slight drop in presentations at this level in 2013.
- The mean marks for each paper evidence a considerable drop from the 2012 results but were more in line with the two preceding years.
- 78% of candidates managed to achieve an A-C award and three candidates managed 100%.
- Overall, the examination was considered to be balanced and set at an appropriate challenge for Intermediate 1.
- Questions and marking instructions were clear and no contentious areas in the marking procedures were identified.

Reading

- A considerable number of candidates scored highly overall in this paper. More able candidates managed their time and coped admirably with the more demanding fourth text.
- Question 1, a 5 mark True or False box, was fairly well done but there were still candidates who confused *dieciséis* with *diecisiete*, and *mayores* with *menores*.
- In question 2, some candidates did not provide sufficient detail in their answers meaning marks could not be awarded, e.g. in 2a (*Tienes la nevera cerca*) many candidates did not put 'nearby'. Likewise, (*Puedes llamar a un amigo si necesitas ayuda*) some candidates did not include 'if you need help' in their answer. In 2b (*No hay distracciones como la television*), missing out 'like television' meant the mark could not be awarded.
- Some candidates encountered the following difficulties in question 4:
 - 4a (*en un pueblo costero al sur de Inglaterra*) many candidates missed out coastal/on the coast and many left *Inglaterra* untranslated in their answer.
 - 4c (*porque el inglés te abre muchas puertas a la hora de buscar trabajo*) some candidates failed to understand the metaphor being used.
 - 4e(i) (*En el tiempo libre fui de compras con otros estudiantes y salimos a cenar o a la bolero*), many candidates did not get two of the three activities required to gain the 2 marks on offer.
 - 4e(ii) (*españoles de otras ciudades*) many candidates did specify "from other cities" and did not get the mark.
 - 4g many candidates did not know the idiom *el año que viene*.

However it should be stressed that the average mark for Question 4 was still an admirable 6 out of 10.

Listening

- The paper was done fairly well, with an average mark of almost 13 out of 20.
- The following questions proved to be difficult for many candidates:
 - 3a *Mi madre es irlandesa* — many candidates translated this as 'English'.

- 4b *porque puedo charlar con mis amigos*. ‘Charlar’ was not understood and often translated as ‘play’.
- 8b *vamos a organizar una fiesta sorpresa* — many candidates missed out the ‘surprise’ of surprise party.
- 9 *Queremos comprarle una camiseta azul y un CD de su grupo favorito* often the colour ‘blue’ and the ‘favourite group’ were missing from answers.
- 10b *el club de informática* less than half of candidates recognised ‘computing’.

Less common problems with some candidates included not recognising basic vocabulary such as days of the week, numbers, countries and words like *familias*, *profesores* and *alumnos*.

Writing

- There was a good response overall, and quality of language in Good and Very Good candidates showed a real attempt to go beyond minimum responses, with many outstanding performances where candidates included some complex sentences.
- Most candidates attempted to cover all four areas fully. A great variety of verbs and verb forms was demonstrated by many candidates.
- Given that this paper does not change from year to year, it is concerning that some candidates cannot cope with the four sections. On occasions, there are sections left blank or done very poorly.
- Common errors such as ‘Mi llamo’, ‘mi gusta’, ‘en mi familia es’ abound; confusion with *ser/estar* is evident; and there is still confusion with simple verb conjugations.
- Too many candidates try to fill the space under the Instituto heading by listing school subjects, and some candidates clearly need guidance on what constitutes three sentences.

Advice for the preparation of future candidates

- 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 complimented on this.
- In reading, candidates need guidance on timing as there is much to cover in 45 minutes. There are too many cases where candidates do not complete the paper, and some barely get to tackling Question 4.
- For Reading and Listening, candidates must be aware that some detail is required and that quite often a one word answer will not be enough at this level. Detailed marking instructions for Listening/Reading are available on the SQA website. These show the type of detail required for answers — please share them with candidates.
- Candidates should carefully read the introductions and the key question words ‘Who’, ‘When’, ‘What’, ‘Why’ and so on. They should always be careful and take their time with supported questions, which they must not assume will be easier.
- To help with Listening, where a dictionary is not provided, candidates should be encouraged to thoroughly learn basic vocabulary in key high frequency areas such as numbers and prices, days of the week, months and seasons, food and drink, weather expressions, school subjects and facilities, leisure and sport, colours, clothes, jobs, places in town, common adjectives, prepositions and question words.
- Please dissuade candidates at all times from giving 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.

- In Writing, given that the task never varies, candidates should be thoroughly prepared in advance and only use the dictionary to check on the spelling of words. It should not be used to make up new sentences. Candidates must understand how this only leads to mistranslation, other tongue interference and poor word order.
- Less able candidates should limit themselves to only three sentences for each area, and should keep these short and uncomplicated.
- Candidates should prioritise accuracy in verbs as well as in other parts of speech, such as gender of nouns, adjectival agreement, cases, singular and plural agreements and also the use of accents.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read over their answers to ensure that they make sense and that their English expression is clear. It follows that they should always try to present their work as neatly as possible and should know that it is possible to lose marks if handwriting is illegible.