

Summary of External Assessment Report 2013 Higher Spanish

General Comments

There was a small increase in the number of presentations, from 1,593 in 2012 to 1,645 in 2013, from a record total of 193 centres. The examination was considered to be fair but robust and, overall, candidates responded positively. Four candidates achieved a score of 100% in the examination.

Reading and Translation

- The topic of the passage was felt to be accessible and of interest to candidates.
- On the whole, answers were mainly clear, and there was little evidence of candidates trying to translate whole sections of the passage.
- In Question 4b Candidates did not recognise the radical changes of *'atender'* and *'asentir'* and also confused *'asienten'* with sitting down.
- In Question 6 many candidates could not decipher the word order and the use of the passive (translating *'se multiplican las posibilidades'* as 'They multiply the possibilities...')
- In Question 8a several candidates did not render the subjunctive mood *'para que sean'* accurately.
- Lack of detail in answers often lead to candidates losing marks unnecessarily even though this is an explicit requirement in responses at this level.
- There were some excellent performances in the Translation. It was obvious in these cases that candidates had taken their time to analyse the sections, and had been taught the skills to approach this task successfully.
- There was some awkward use of English in translating sense unit 1, *'el fútbol es vital para aumentar la asistencia a clase'*, with many candidates writing 'the' football' and some not recognising the false friend *'asistencia'*.
- In sense unit 2, *'Además, consigue que los chicos se porten mejo'*, *'consigue que'* posed problems for some, perhaps as a result of not recognising its root in *conseguir*.
- Sense units 4 and 5 caused most problems. In sense unit 4, *Hasta hemos visto*, many translated *'hasta'* as 'until'. Many retained the Spanish word order into English 'Even we have seen', which is clearly incorrect. In addition, some candidates did not recognise the irregular past participle *'visto'*.
- In sense unit 5, *'que mejoran las notas de los alumnos'*, some candidates translated *'notas'* as 'notes' even though this is considered a high frequency word for this topic.

Directed Writing

- Despite making the mode of transport explicitly clear in the preamble, (Last summer, you went **on a coach trip** to Barcelona along with your Spanish class and Teacher), a

disappointing number of candidates travelled *'en avión'*, subsequently losing two marks for bullet point one: 'How you travelled to Spain and what you did on the journey'.

- There were occasions, though not many, where candidates failed to address both parts of the two-part bullet points, thereby incurring the same penalty.
- Common grammatical errors highlighted by markers were;
 - inconsistent use of the imperfect and preterite tenses;
 - the use of 'ser/estar';
 - substituting 'era' for 'había';
 - gender of definite and indefinite articles;
 - the incorrect use of 'por' in past tense for periods of time;
 - adjectival agreement and expressions of time, such as 'last summer', 'in the evenings' and 'on my last day'.

Listening

- The content of the Listening paper was of special and real interest to young people, who performed well in this part of the paper. Markers noted that the CD was of good speed and quality, and that the level of language was appropriate to Higher.
- In Question 6 '*conozco a un chico que, durante una entrevista de trabajo, empezó a escribir un mensaje*' some candidates omitted '*empezó*' from their answer and lost the first mark for this question.
- Question 7a, '*creo que es el mejor invento del siglo*', several candidates did not understand 'best' and/or 'century'.
- In Question 7b, '*lo uso todos los días cuando voy al trabajo en metro*' some candidates omitted 'every day', thus failing to state when exactly she used it as required by the words of the question.
- In Question 9a, '*mi padre usa Skype para llamar gratis a mi hermano que está estudiando en Dinamarca*' many candidates did not catch 'llamar' and some left 'Dinamarca' untranslated.

Short Essay

- There was a good response overall to the short essay topic and only a couple of candidates struggled to write more than a few lines. It was felt that this paper was done better than in 2012.
- There were many very good technology essays, with really personal responses and mature opinions expressed. There was virtually no irrelevant material in any essays.
- Some less able candidates or those relying on a pre-learned topic coming up, or who could not cope adequately with basic Spanish structures, struggled with the topic of technology.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

General comments

- Centres should convey the primacy of sense and accuracy in both Spanish and English throughout the examination. Candidates should be prepared to proof read all of their answers.

- It follows that candidates should present their work as neatly as possible as marks can be lost if handwriting is illegible.
- It is recommended that teachers/lecturers share the findings of this report as well as marking instructions, the examination paper for 2013 and the writing criteria for both essays with students. In this way, students will be better informed about the amount of detail required for marks in Reading/Listening, the precision required for translation, and the standards required for the Directed Writing and Short Essay.

Reading

- Candidates will be better prepared to comprehend the text if they read the title and introduction in English and all of the questions, **before** they attempt to respond.
- Candidates at Higher level must give full and detailed answers to achieve the marks allocated. Lack of detail often leads to candidates losing marks.
- In both Reading and Listening, candidates 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.

Translation

- Time should be spent discussing with candidates the difference between translation and interpretation.
- Encourage candidates to stick closely to the text but to be wary of word-for-word translation as this could result in an imprecise or awkward rendering of the section.
- Candidates should consider their use of English expression and how best to deal with Spanish word order and the Spanish use of articles.
- There will always be a variety of tenses in the Translation section, and centres must prepare candidates adequately for this. The 2013 Translation included examples of the present, future, present subjunctive and perfect tenses.
- The Translation section is worth 10% of the whole examination and candidates must deal with this accordingly. An omission of one **key word** can mean a loss of 2%.
- Candidates must never give alternatives and will only be rewarded if both options are correct.

Listening

- Centres need to train candidates to use the two minutes allocated, before the first listening, to study the heading, the questions and the number of marks allocated to them. They should use this to anticipate the amount and type of information that may be required in their responses.
- At Higher level, candidates must give detail in their answers. Please share with them the marking instructions for this and other past papers to show precisely the detail required.

Directed Writing and Short Essay

- It is important that candidates read the DW introductory scenario, as well as the six bullet points, to ensure they are aware of all information vital to the relevance or otherwise of the subsequent bullet points.

- Candidates must ensure that where a bullet point has two clauses that they provide information responding to both parts in order to fully address the whole bullet point. If a bullet point is not fully addressed, there is an automatic penalty of minus 2 marks.
- Candidates need to consider ways of structuring their essays so that they ensure all bullet points are covered and addressed on balance. They could, for example, write in the form of a paragraph for each of the six compulsory bullet points, with perhaps a blank line between each one.
- Some 'short' essays are unnecessarily long! Centres should encourage candidates to be more succinct, and try to stick as closely as possible to the upper limit of 150 words.
- It is always encouraging to see a variety of tenses being used in the Short Essay.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use the dictionary only to look up single words or to check spelling and gender, and not to create whole new sentences
- In the course of teaching and learning, candidates should be encouraged to learn, and to get into the habit of using; co-ordinating conjunctions, expressions of time, and subordinate clauses, which help to make the language flow more naturally.