

## SQA Higher Spanish External Assessment Report 2014

### General comments

- The vast majority of candidates responded well to what was considered by Markers to be a fair yet demanding paper.
- The mean marks for each component, with the 2013 marks in brackets, were:
- Reading and Directed Writing = 25.7 out of 45 (26.1)
- Listening/Writing = 19.7 out of 30 (19.0)
- Speaking = 22.5 out of 25 (22.1)

### Reading and Directed Writing

- The Reading Comprehension was generally well done, with candidates relating well to a current topic and providing detailed answers.
- Many candidates did not provide enough detail (underlined) in their answers to:
  - Question 3(b) answer: lo intentaron todo por salvar la fábrica
  - Question 5(a) answer: Me enteré de que cerraban una panadería por jubilación ... y la compré
  - Question 5(b) answer: la lucha por la supervivencia.
- Some candidates failed to understand the comparison being made in Question 7(b): En mi trabajo de taxista, veo la vida pasar en la calle. Antes en la fábrica solo veía pasar el tiempo.
- In translation sense units 1 and 5 the stressed preterites me puse and hubo were not recognised by many candidates.
- In sense unit 2, pero desgraciadamente sin éxito caused issues for some and the word order of sense unit 3, Pasaban los meses, confused many candidates.
- In sense unit 4 Hice un curso de instalación de alarmas y otro de informática many candidates translated hice as 'I made' and un curso de instalación de alarmas y otro de informática as 'a course on installing alarms and other IT' instead of 'and another on IT'.
- Markers commented that there were many examples of Good DW essays but perhaps fewer Very Good ones this year.
- Very few candidates incurred penalties for omitting bullet points in the DW.
- However, in bullet point 2, 'Where the house was situated and what it was like in comparison to your own', some candidates did not address the second part.
- Some candidates were too intent on writing a well-rehearsed DW essay without mentioning the idea of this year's scenario of a house exchange.

### Listening and personal response essay

- The Listening section proved to be very accessible, and the overall performance was very pleasing with an average mark of 13 out of 20.
- Some candidates did not recognise vocabulary items such as alquilar (Question 1b) and la sinceridad (Question 6a).
- Some candidates did not give the detailed required (underlined)

- Question 3(a) es bastante serio.
  - Question 3(b) es la persona más comprensiva
  - Question 4(a) Marisa es muy divertida
- In Question 8, candidates overall gained less than half marks by failing to give enough detail in their answers — muchos usuarios de las redes sociales tienen listas interminables de amigos, pero solo conocen realmente a unos pocos.
  - The personal response topic of friendship with the social network perspective engaged candidates fully.
  - Most candidates covered the three questions of the topic fully, with varying degrees of accuracy and success.
  - Many candidates made good use of the vocabulary, structures and ideas from the listening stimulus.
  - Markers noted at times poor use of tenses and infinitives, misuse of dictionary, confusion between ser and estar, poor plural and adjectival agreement, and a lack of control of accents and other tongue interference.
  - Some responses were unnecessarily long, resulting in serious errors.

## Advice to centres for the preparation of future candidates

### Reading and Translation

- Draw candidates' attention to the mechanisms in the passage which are there to help them — the introduction in English, people's names, the questions themselves, and line references in the questions and in the passage. Also, answers will always appear in the passage in chronological order.
- Candidates must understand that full and detailed answers are required in order to access marks.
- Please discourage candidates from translating long sections of the passage as this is a waste of their valuable time and can lead to them bringing contradictory information into their answers.
- Candidates should be encouraged to make sure that their answers make sense in English.
- Centres should continue to develop candidates' strategies in translation, such as tense recognition, word order, and the proper use of a dictionary.
- Candidates must be encouraged to devote an appropriate amount of time and care to the translation which is worth 10% of their overall mark.
- In Translation, candidates must never give alternatives — if they do, they will only be rewarded if both options are correct.
- Candidates should carefully look at every word in the Translation and pay particular attention to the tenses and structures.

### Directed Writing

- It is important that candidates carefully read both the introductory scenario as well as the six bullet points.
- Candidates should be made aware that some bullet points may have two parts to them and that these will be highlighted with the word 'and' in bold type. To fully address the bullet point, candidates must deal with both parts. If a bullet point is not fully addressed, there is an automatic penalty of minus 2 marks.

- A good essay will demonstrate accurate handling of all aspects of grammar, spelling and accents, as well as a variety of tenses, adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases and coordinating conjunctions.
- Candidates must be flexible in their use of learned material.
- Centres may share the Extended Grade Related Criteria for Directed Writing and the Short Essay with candidates, so that they are aware of what is expected of them in terms of Content, Accuracy, Variety and Range.

### **Listening/Writing**

- Before listening to the recording, candidates should study the questions and the marks allocated to them to help anticipate the type of information that may be required.
- Some 'short' essays are unnecessarily long! Centres should encourage candidates to be more succinct, as in very many cases candidates do themselves a disservice by grossly exceeding the word count, often sacrificing accuracy for length.
- If three questions are asked in the Short Essay stimulus, at least two of these must be addressed. Otherwise, a penalty of one pegged mark, 2%, will be deducted.
- Centres may share the Extended Grade Related Criteria for Directed Writing and the Short Essay with candidates, so that they are aware of what is expected of them in terms of Content, Accuracy, Variety and Range.