

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Number of resulted entries in 2012 240

Speaking average: 37.3/50

Candidates engaged well with the subject matter of the reading paper, particularly the comprehension questions. Overall, candidates found the translation fairly accessible though many still had difficulty with the inferential question.

Candidate performance in Reading/Translation and advice to centres

- In Questions 1, 2 (a), 3, 4 and 5 candidates provided detailed and accurate responses. They also performed reasonably well in the Translation section, especially in sense units 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10.
- Candidates experienced some difficulty with expressions like ‘tanto ... como..’, ‘dejar de ...’, ‘encontrar’, ‘fuentes’ and ‘raíces’. In Q2(b) there were difficulties relating to the ‘failure’ of political projects and the distinction between Capitalism and left wing politics.
- In Q6 many candidates provided information from the text rather than drawing inferences. Some misread the text when attempting this question and found it difficult to express their ideas. Confusion arose between ‘immigration’ and ‘emigration’, and many did not understand the word ‘Utopia’.
- Some candidates included quotes from the text but just repeated these in English instead of using them to develop their argument. Alarming a small minority of candidates, did not attempt this question at all. SQA’s exemplification of performance in this question should be used by teachers to assist candidates in developing the skills necessary to answer this question.
- In translation, some candidates had problems with ‘se han establecido’, ‘definitivamente’, ‘lo suyo’ and ‘Esa’. More attention should be given to the development of translation skills and, in particular, ways of converting idiomatic expressions from Spanish into English, and candidates should take care with tenses.
- Candidates should divide time appropriately between the comprehension questions, the inferential question and the passage for translation.

Candidate performance in Listening/Discursive Writing and advice to centres

- Candidates seemed to find the Listening component challenging (especially Part A) with few candidates scoring really high marks overall. They performed better in Part B – in Q1, Q2 and especially Q8.
- Candidates should be familiar with recognising numbers. They should also be encouraged to provide full and detailed answers as far as possible.
- Candidates could access Listening materials on the Internet, especially short news items on Spanish radio and develop strategies for note-taking.
- In Discursive Writing, the more able tend to excel in this area. **All** essay titles were attempted, the most popular choices being Q2, Q4 and Q5. On the whole, essays were well structured and written in paragraphs. Candidates generally achieved good results when they incorporated appropriate learned material into their answer and when their essays were relevant to the question. Candidates ran into difficulties when going beyond prepared material.
- Major errors related to the misuse of ‘Ser’ and ‘Estar’, and the subjunctive. There were also mistakes in adjectival agreement, genders of nouns and the omission of pronouns
- Misuse of the dictionary was evident in the essays which achieved Satisfactory or lower. There was occasional other tongue interference (French, Italian and English).
- For Q2, unfortunately, there were some ‘learned’ essays produced on the advantages/

disadvantages of the Internet, which resulted in a maximum mark of only 16 being awarded for irrelevance.

- More grammatical accuracy is required, and candidates should address all areas of title avoiding irrelevant detail
- Candidates should be encouraged to use sophisticated language appropriate to Advanced Higher level

Candidate performance in Speaking and advice to centres

- Most candidates were comfortable and confident in the language, with only a minority failing to score 30 or more out of 50.
- Fluency and readily taking the initiative were features of good performances this year.
- Candidates made good use of learned material, attempted to go beyond minimal responses, and also incorporated some useful and interesting discussion techniques into their conversation
- Centres should focus on grammatical accuracy, particularly with regard to use of verbs (especially the preterite and the perfect), gender of nouns, adjectival agreements, use of 'Ser' and 'Estar' and the subjunctive.
- Continue to train candidates in discussion techniques in the language to enable them to deal with any question they may be asked which goes beyond learned material.

Candidates' performance in the Folio

- A reasonable range of texts and topics were attempted, and candidates performed slightly better in this component compared to last year. There were no Language in work reports.
- Presentation of Folio work was excellent. Literary texts were generally tackled more successfully than background topics.
- The best essays were those that had a question/title which was not vague, general or obvious but one which genuinely led candidates to adopt an analytical approach or allow for two sides of an argument to be developed. Often, there was too much of a narrative approach taken and insufficient critical analysis or evaluation.
- Reliable bibliographies containing three or more references to sources were also a feature of good practice.
- A significant number of candidates do not proof-check their work effectively in English, especially when quoting in Spanish from a literary text.
- The title for two Folio pieces for the ERV unit should but should generate a discursive/evaluative approach.
- It would be advisable to offer students a choice of essay titles to ensure more individual responses if they are studying the same text or background topic.
- For the ERV unit, candidates should be encouraged to study two literary texts or to tackle their background topic in an evaluative manner.
- A compare and contrast approach works well, provided that the focus of the comparison and contrast is rooted in Hispanic literature and/or culture.
- Candidates should not study only **one** poem or song as a literary text or only **one** film as a background topic nor submit a Folio with both essays on the same literary text/film.
- Candidates should develop the quality and breadth of their bibliographies.

General

- Centres should share all criteria/GRC/pegged marks/performance descriptors and SQA documentation with candidates.
- Candidates should be encouraged to make full use of the SQA website, and refer to External Assessment reports for AH and Marking Instructions for past papers.