

External Assessment Report 2012
Spanish Higher

Presentations in Higher Spanish 1,593 in 2012 (up from 1,488 in 2011)

Paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing 26.0 out of 35 (25.2 in 2011)

Paper 2 Listening/Writing 17.8 out of 30 (19.1 in 2011)

Speaking 21.9 out of 25 (21.7 in 2011)

Overall total 65.7% in 2012 (66% in 2011)

PERFORMED WELL

- There were many very good performances in **Reading**, with very few candidates scoring less than half marks. Most candidates attempted all questions, and candidates showed good comprehension skills in locating answers from the passage, thus avoiding the translation of large sections of Spanish.
- Performance in **Translation** was also encouraging, especially in centres where it is obvious that translation is taught as a discreet skill and not just as another comprehension question.
- The **Directed Writing** was well done with an average mark of over 9 out of 15.
- **Listening** was generally well done.
- Likewise quality was evident with the **short essay** where the average was over 6 out of 10.
- There were many examples of well-structured and highly accurate pieces of writing which addressed all three questions in the stimulus and which contained an excellent range and variety of language structures.

DEMANDING

- In **Reading** too many candidates provided insufficient detail in their answers.
- A number of candidates were penalised for poor English expression and/or poor dictionary skills.
- Many candidates struggled with sense groups 1 and 5 of the **Translation**.
- The **Directed Writing** scenario caused few problems and the only real issue was with Bullet Point 3, 'What you and your friend did to help out in the house', where a considerable number of candidates addressed this in the first person singular, making no reference at all to the friend, and thus incurring a penalty.
- In **Listening** Questions 3 and 7b were found to be challenging ... As ever with the Listening section, candidates must give sufficient detail in their answers.
- The topic for the **Short Essay** was one all candidates should have been familiar with, yet it was evident from some responses that some centres had not covered the topic in detail, if at all. However, most candidates were well prepared and answered the three questions of the stimulus in an accurate and balanced way. There were some candidates whose grammatical awareness was lacking and who relied on the dictionary, ending up with English word order and putting infinitives.

ADVICE FOR PREPARATION OF FUTURE CANDIDATES

General

- When writing in Spanish candidates should make sure that they thoroughly check over their work for accents, spelling and grammatical accuracy.
- Likewise, they should try to present their work as neatly as possible. If handwriting is illegible, points can be lost.
- Candidates are not allowed to write alternative answers. If one of the answers is incorrect, they will lose the mark, even if the other one is correct.
- It is recommended that centres share this Report with candidates. Likewise, Extended Writing Criteria for both Directed Writing and the Short Essay.

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Reading

- Fewer candidates incurred penalties for the omission of bullet points, an encouraging and continuing trend. Overall, the responses to Paper 1 were good to very good, with a range of marks representative of ability within the field.
- Candidates should read the title and introduction in English, as well as reading **all** of the questions, prior to attempting their answers and should be aware that there are many mechanisms in the passage to help them locate their answers — the introduction in English, sub-headings and people's names, the questions themselves, and line references in the questions and in the passage are all there to help the candidate. Answers will always appear in the passage in chronological order.
- Candidates should give detail in their answers. Punctuation in the passage often helps candidates to identify discreet points.

Translation

- Translation must be taught as a discreet skill, and not as just another part of the Reading comprehension - a clear, precise and accurate translation of the section is needed.
- Candidates should be taught subject and tense recognition, and they should be aware of Spanish word order.
- Candidates must not paraphrase or give alternatives, nor should they translate direct speech into indirect speech.

Directed Writing

- It is very important that candidates read the introductory scenario as well as the six bullet points, being aware too that some bullet points **will** have two parts to them. This will be highlighted with the word 'and' in bold type. To fully address the bullet point, they must deal fully with these two parts.
- It is a good idea for candidates to tick the different things they must cover in the scenario and bullet points, then cross off once covered.
- While it is appropriate for candidates to use learned material, they should avoid reproducing it unaltered. They must carefully address the demands of each bullet point (which do, of course, change from year to year).
- Candidates should be advised to use the dictionary only to check for accuracy in spelling and accents — not to invent new sentences in Spanish (also applicable for Short Essay)

Listening

- Before they listen to the recording, candidates should study the heading and questions and the marks allocated to them. This will help them anticipate the type of information that will be required of them.
- Full and detailed answers, including adverbs and adjectives where appropriate.
- Candidates should put a line through any notes that they do not wish to be marked.

Short Essay

- 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. Grammatical accuracy is very important in the short essay, and candidates should look out for verb tenses, gender agreement, spelling and lack of accents, which can be checked through appropriate use of the dictionary.