

External Examiners Report 2013

Spanish - Intermediate 2

General Comments

- There was a considerable increase in presentations from 1,715 to 2,056.
- The mean marks for each paper evidence a great improvement overall, but particularly in writing.
- 92% of candidates achieve a grade A-C and seven candidates achieved 100% in the exam.
- The content of the examination was appropriate to the prescribed themes and topics. It was felt that in the reading paper there was a good balance in the difficulty of questions, and in the listening, the recording was clear with appropriate speed and clarity of diction from the speakers.

Reading

- It was clear that candidates had worked on past papers and had been well trained in answering questions and coping with the time allocated to the paper.
- Candidates gave good and fairly detailed responses, with good English expression, to most questions. Very few failed to complete or pass the paper.
- However, three questions were more discriminating and less than half of the candidates got the marks allocated to them:
 - Question 3d: Many candidates did not recognise either the pluperfect or the past participle in *ya había leído*.
 - In Question 4e (i): *La vivencia con familias fue uno de los puntos fuertes*. Here Spanish word order caused problems, and also candidates missed out 'one of' in their answers.
 - Finally, the last question, 4g: *El jefe, Juan Montoya, concluye que los jóvenes voluntarios han demostrado su capacidad de trabajar en equipo y, lo más importante, de cuidar con cariño a los más pequeños de Perú...*
- Often, dictionary misuse/mistranslation of *equipo* as 'equipment' or 'equipped', *cuidar* as 'city', and lack of detail in answers led to candidates losing at least one of the two marks on offer here.
- It was disappointing to see candidates losing marks for mistaking *doce* for ten, in Q1a and, in Q4f(i), *dieciséis* for seventeen. *Alemania* in Q2 was not recognised by many and left as *Alemania*. *Mayor* in Q2b *gente mayor* was translated as 'mayor', *trabajadores* in Q2c *busca trabajadores españoles* as 'hard working'.
- Insufficient detail in some answers caused marks to be lost:
 - In Q3b, candidates missed out 'gold', the 'ice' of 'ice hockey', and 'black belt' in their answer to Pablo's sporting achievements: *Este joven mexicano tiene medallas de oro en hockey sobre hielo y es cinta negra en taekwondo*. I
 - In Q4c, some candidates failed to give both 'read' and 'write' in their answer to the morning activities: *Por la mañana ayudamos a enseñar a los niños a escribir y leer*.

Listening

- Most candidates found this paper quite straightforward. Very few achieved less than half marks, and several achieved full marks.
- In Questions 1a, 1b(i), 2a, and 3b, more than 90% of candidates got the correct answers.
- Where questions required specific details, some candidates lost mark for answers which were too general:
 - In Q1d(i) ¡Y pensar que tengo tantos exámenes dentro de un mes a finales de junio candidates merely replied with June and did not get the mark
 - Likewise, 'very' was required at this level for Question 1d(ii) 'How does this make her feel?' *¡Estoy muy estresada!*
 - Question 2d was done fairly badly, despite containing straightforward vocabulary. 'What **two** things does Carlos like to do with his grandfather?' (2) *...y a veces vamos juntos a tomarnos un helado y dar un paseo por el parque.* 'Go to the park' or 'go for a walk' would be insufficient answers here.
 - In Question 3a(ii) 'little' or 'younger sister' was required in the answer for *hermana pequeña*. There was also mistranslation of *hermana* as 'brother'.

Writing

- Most candidates performed well, there were very few missed bullet points, and it is clear that candidates have been very well prepared to write more than acceptable letters of application.
- Markers found it particularly pleasing when candidates wrote a personalised response to the letter, rather than a repetitive letter learned by heart.
- Having said that, some candidates failed to identify the job title, secretario/secretaria, even though it is given in bold in the advert.
- As in previous years, the request for information about the job and the reasons for application are, generally speaking, the most thinly covered bullet points. This results in a less balanced essay and on occasions prevents candidates from achieving full marks.
- Some candidates self-penalise through responses which are overly long, resulting in less accuracy.
- Some common school related mistakes highlighted by markers were:
 - 'mejorar mi español' instead of the correct *mejorar mi nivel de español*;
 - 'estudio la historia, la geografía...' instead of *estudio historia, geografía...*;
 - 'soy fuerte en mates', which should be *se me dan bien las mates*;
 - 'voy en cuarto' which should be *estoy en cuarto*.

Advice for the preparation of future candidates

- At this level, in both reading and listening, candidates **must give detail** in their answers and appreciate the importance of qualifiers, such as *bastante* or *muy*.
- Candidates must not 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.
- Detailed marking instructions for Reading/Listening are available on the SQA website. These show the type of detail required for answers. Please share them with candidates.
- Candidates should be encouraged to memorise vocabulary from the prescribed themes and topics. Confidence in key areas such as numbers and time, prices, weather, colours, sports and pastimes, food and drink, jobs and careers, places and directions, common adjectives

and adverbs and prepositions is necessary at this level to be able to cope with the Listening paper, where a dictionary is not available. This is also true for Reading, where candidates will save valuable time if they know the word rather than having to refer constantly to the dictionary.

- Many candidates use excellent constructions and expressions, and are being taught some very good idiomatic expressions and business language, which they use to great effect in their job applications. Candidates should be encouraged to write personalised essays and centres should avoid a template approach to this task.
- Centred should encourage candidates to prepare adequately for the section on asking for information. They should be aware that even in otherwise Very Good essays, expressions such as 'Quisiera más información sobre el puesto' will not be sufficient to ensure a top mark. **Specific questions** should be asked for this bullet point.
- Candidates should write a balanced response and letters should have structure. One approach would be to encourage candidates to write in the form of a paragraph to each of the five compulsory bullet points. This also makes it easy for the candidate to check that he or she has covered all of the bullet points.
- Less able candidates who find it difficult to memorise material should be encouraged to concentrate only on the five compulsory bullets in an uncomplicated way, and perhaps avoid the two optional ones.