

# Summary of External Assessment Report 2013 Advanced Higher Spanish

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## General Comments

- 2013 saw the highest number of candidates presented at this level in the last four years.
- Six new centres presented in 2013.
- There were no significant setting issues for the 2013 paper and no changes to the experienced setting and vetting teams.

## Speaking

- Candidates continue to perform well in speaking with this year's cohort achieving an excellent average mark of 39.7 out of 50.
- Candidates were at ease with the method of assessment with the vast majority being enthusiastic and well prepared.
- Many candidates made good use of learned material, were enterprising in their attempts to go beyond minimal responses, and incorporated useful and interesting discussion techniques into their conversation with the Visiting Assessor.
- Fluency and readily taking the initiative were features of good performances.

## Folio

- A reasonable range of texts and topics were attempted and there were no Language in Work reports this year.
- Successful essays were those with questions which stimulated an analytical response or which allowed for two sides of an argument to be developed often with a compare/contrast approach to discussion.
- Less successful candidates were those who were not set titles or questions which generated debate or critical analysis, or titles which were over-ambitious or too general. This stimulated an obvious approach that tended to generate one-sided arguments with predictable conclusions.
- Essays that stood out from the others were those which displayed a good level of English and accurate/justified quotation from the text and reliable bibliographies containing three or more references.
- A significant number of candidates did not proof-check their work effectively in English and especially when quoting in Spanish from a literary text.
- Often, particularly in background topics, the content was (almost exclusively) factual and not analytical. This year some background topics such as Festivals, Tourism and the Spanish Monarchy struggled to get into the "Satisfactory" category due to their inability to reflect a level of demand appropriate to Advanced Higher.

## Reading and Translation

- Some difficulty arose with rendering accurately expressions such as *'sea cual sea la fuente'*, *'pagada por'*, *'en el puesto de trabajo'* and *'tarde o temprano'*. In addition language such as *'publicidad'* (mistranslated as publicity), *'seguros médicos'* and *'lista larga'* caused problems.
- Candidates were quite often unable to identify the area of text that contained the answer to questions and some answers did not answer with sufficient detail.
- Candidates fared better than in previous years with the inferential question, 'How does the writer succeed..?' by picking up on techniques used by the writer and the perspectives of the text. Those who were less successful were those who were only able to glean information from the text rather than making inferences from the writer's techniques.
- A disappointing performance throughout Paper I was characterised by poor English.
- Translation Sense units 1, 3, 6, 7 and 10 in the Translation section seemed more accessible than the others to this cohort. In sense units 2, 5, 8 and 9, some had problems with rendering the following words or phrases into good English:
  - Unit 2 *'hubieran sido más'* was poorly translated by many, who failed to grasp the appropriate sequence of tenses.
  - Unit 5 *'consultora'* was wrongly translated as 'consultancy'.
  - Unit 7 *'un cigarro'* was occasionally mistranslated as 'a cigar'.
  - Unit 8 the majority of candidates did not translate *'tabaco'* correctly.
  - Unit 9 caused problems with tenses and led to candidates writing clumsy English.

## Listening and Discursive Writing

- A surprising number of candidates did not get full marks for Question 1 as they submitted '70%' as their answer for *'un sesenta por ciento'*
- Occasionally candidates' general knowledge let them down. Some clearly thought that *"catalán"* was an area of Spain.
- In Questions 5, 6 and 8, language such as *'tiene su propio nombre'*, *'liberarlos de la tortura'* and *'la grandeza de una nación'* was found to be challenging. The latter was at times wrongly answered as 'the nobility of a nation'.
- Generally speaking, 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. Essays about immigration, energy and stress occasionally came up with interesting and original ideas.
- There was appropriate use and accurate treatment of subjunctive clauses by some candidates (e.g. *no pienso que ninguna opción sea...*) as well as appropriate linking structures and opinion phrases (e.g. *me inclino a creer/cabe destacar que...*)
- As in previous years, when going beyond prepared material, many essays descended into unidiomatic translation from English into Spanish and poor control of tenses/verbs.
- Some major errors related to:
  - The misuse of 'ser' and 'estar'
  - Failure to employ the subjunctive mood when required.
  - Inappropriate use of the infinitive

- Adjectival agreement, genders of nouns, and the omission of pronouns
  - Misuse of the dictionary (in the essays that achieved Satisfactory or less).
  - Occasional other tongue interference (mostly French).
- Some candidates took generic learned material and misused their time fitting it awkwardly into a response. For Question 4, there were a number of learned essays on the environment that did not always fully address the question. In Question 5, the subtlety of meaning behind ‘manipulación total’ was beyond some candidates.

## Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

### General Comments

- Spend time sharing and helping candidates to understand success criteria and SQA documentation, e.g. encourage candidates to make full use of the SQA website, refer them to External Assessment Reports for AH Spanish from the last couple of years as well as the Marking Instructions for specific past question papers.
- Incorporate Exemplification of Standards and Professional Development Workshop materials into lessons.
- Candidates should be reminded that handwriting needs to be clearly legible to ensure marks awarded equate to content.

### Speaking

- Sustain the good work in preparing candidates for this assessment, but perhaps increase 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 unpredictable questions which transcend learned material.
- If a candidate speaks about a background topic in the assessment, it would be more interesting if ideas were presented in a Spanish context (e.g. role of women in Spain as well as in Scotland).

### Folio

- The choice of title for Folio pieces is crucially important. The title should not be too vague (e.g. ‘Symbolism in Bodas de Sangre’, ‘La Fiesta de San Juan’, ‘The Civil War in Spain’ etc.). It should specify a focus for discussion and should generate a discursive/evaluative approach.
- It is advisable to offer candidates a choice of essay titles to ensure more individual responses if many are studying the same text or background topic.
- For the ERV Unit, try either to encourage candidates to study two literary texts or to tackle their background topic in a manner that is appropriate to Advanced Higher (i.e. less information and more evaluation).
- Candidates should be steered away from making sweeping generalisations that are not substantiated regarding e.g. bullfighting, same-sex marriage, and immigration to the USA. It may be more appropriate for candidates to study a second literary text if the maturity of discussion required in these topics is not achievable.

- Discourage candidates from choosing to study only one text as a background topic. Many candidates did not score well in essays of this type as their approach tended to be limiting, mostly narrative and one-dimensional.
- Submitting a Folio with both essays on the same literary text/film is unacceptable.
- Candidates should develop the quality and breadth of their bibliographies overall. 'Wikipedia' (without mention of a website), a reference to a newspaper (on its own with no article noted), and 'teachers' notes' do not constitute appropriate items for a bibliography.
- More care and attention is needed when proof-checking in relation to the use of English, spelling, typing errors and punctuation, as well as accuracy in quotation from literary texts. Candidates should avoid the use of inappropriate register and expressions. They should vary their expression throughout their essay and avoid the repetition of words and phrases. The successful application of English literacy skills in Folio pieces is very important.

### Reading and Translation

- Candidates should be trained to plan their time effectively to deal with each section on balance.
- In the Inferential question, centres should steer candidates away from providing a factual response or one which repeats answers from the comprehension questions. Candidates need specific training in how to make inferences from the writer's techniques; use of rhetorical questions, word choice, use of quotations, engaging the reader's sympathy, case studies, short, punchy sentences, format, capitalisation etc.
- Answers to the inferential question should be well structured and have a rounded conclusion, preferably at the end of the answer. Any quotation from the text should be appropriate and relevant, not just a repetition of what has been argued in English. SQA's exemplification of performance in this question should be used by teachers/lecturers to assist candidates in developing inferencing skills.
- More attention should be given to the development of translation skills and in ways of rendering idiomatic expressions effectively in English.
- Special care should be taken with recognising, and accurately translating, tenses.
- Centres should ensure that all candidates at this level have developed their skills in the use of a dictionary.

### Listening and Discursive Writing

- Candidates at this level should be familiar with recognising numbers (high or low) in any Listening text.
- It may be a good idea to suggest that candidates access audio materials on the internet, especially short news items on Spanish radio.
- Teachers/lecturers should advise candidates to use the time they have to examine questions before they hear the first recording. They may also advise on strategies for note-taking while they are listening to the recording encourage candidates to provide full and detailed answers.
- Maximising use of target language in class will help develop listening skills.
- More grammatical accuracy is required in discursive writing.
- Centres should train candidates to address all aspects of the question set instead of training them to reproduce rehearsed essays that may not be relevant.

- Centres could encourage candidates to avoid high frequency language and to adopt a strategy to incorporate sophisticated language appropriate to Advanced Higher level and relevant to the subject matter of the essay.
- Impress upon candidates that they should set aside some time during the examination to use their dictionary to proof-check their essay.
- Try to get candidates to focus on structure and to reveal their conclusion at the end of their essay and not in the first paragraph.