

EXAMINERS' REPORT

AM SPANISH

FIRST SESSION 2018



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ta' Malta

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The table below outlines the results obtained by the candidates who sat for the Advanced Spanish Exam during the May 2018 session.

Candidates' results, May 2018

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	Total
NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	6	6	7	5	3	3	3	33
% OF TOTAL	18.18	18.18	21.21	15.15	9.09	9.09	9.09	100

Observations on the general performance of the candidates for each exercise are being documented below.

Focused Remarks

Oral - Picture Interpretation and Free -Topic Conversation

As in previous years, the Oral Examination consisted of two parts: a picture interpretation exercise (20 marks) and a free-topic conversation (10 marks). Most candidates were very well prepared for both tasks. In fact, a total of 19 students (out of 33) got 25 marks or more. Although this year's level was better than last year's, some candidates failed to maintain a coherent and well-structured conversation with their Examiner. Some lacked knowledge of the vocabulary required to describe the picture in detail and failed to employ the adequate grammatical structures to produce a more natural and complex dialogue.

Below is a list of the most common mistakes:

- Interferences from other languages, especially Italian and English,
- Lack of subject-verb agreement,
- Use of the infinitive instead of a conjugated verb,
- Incorrect verbal mode (Indicative and Subjunctive),
- Wrong verbal tenses,
- Lack of article-noun-adjective agreement with regards to gender, for example: "la problema" and "la día".

However, overall, the Examiners were satisfied with the candidates' performance. Most students had a very good range of syntactic structures and made minor mistakes which did not hinder their interaction with the Examiners. Some candidates demonstrated enough independence to develop their ideas and opinions to an advanced stage.

Paper I

Essay Writing and Short Writing Exercise

In the first section, the majority opted for question number 1 which required the students to produce an argumentative essay of around 250-300 words on piercings and tattoos. The titles that were chosen the least were numbers 3 and 4 which asked students to narrate a negative experience while using social media and to discuss the popularity of cartoons amongst adults respectively.

Most of the candidates did well but many made a lot of orthographic mistakes and used only a very limited range of words and expressions to formulate their ideas. Many repeatedly failed to distinguish the verbs 'ser' and 'estar'. In addition, some students misused the Subjunctive Mood in phrases such as: 'es importante que/espero que', etc., and instead used the Indicative Mood. Moreover, numerous candidates used the article 'un/a' before 'otro/a', some words were written in Italian, such as: 'rimango' instead of 'me quedo' and 'mi porta' instead of 'me trae' and other linking words and connectors were directly translated from English.

In the second section, 12 candidates opted for the first short essay, whereas 16 candidates chose the second title. Most students who chose the first one did not start the email correctly; 'Hola' instead of 'Estimado/a', which is a more formal and appropriate greeting when writing a complaint letter/email. A common mistake in this essay was the use of the Pretérito Perfecto to refer to completed actions in the past. Besides, content wise, most letters emails were too direct. Ideas were presented in an inadequate manner, lacking appropriate format and register usage.

Candidates who answered question 2 made similar mistakes. Many did not make use of connectors to enrich their writings. In some cases, information was not well organized and structured and there was no clear progression throughout the essays. However, there was good use of complex vocabulary such as: 'gastronomía' instead of 'comida/platos', 'teñir mi pelo', etc.

The Examiners would like to point out that most of the texts were too short and for this reason, they highly encourage candidates to write at least the minimum number of words required in the task and to expand their ideas further.

Paper II

Language Use Exercises

A1

Most of the candidates failed to complete the sentences in an adequate way and simply copied the same words from the text without changing the subject pronoun and the conjugation of the verbs. The Examiners would like to recall that questions are directed towards students and are thus written in 'usted' (a more respectful way to say 'you'). However, when the candidates answer the questions, they must change the subject pronoun from 'usted' to 'yo' (I).

A2

This exercise seemed to be the most difficult section of Paper II. Most candidates could not replace the underlined words with a synonym and instead rearranged the sentence structure to include more words, rather than replacing the target words.

A3

Overall, candidates answered this section well although many failed to use 'tan + adjetivo + como' (e) correctly.

Written Comprehension

The majority did very well but some of them failed to answer in full sentences, especially when the question required two answers. In the section where the students are asked to write down a summary, candidates should not exceed the word limit.

Paper III

Literature Appreciation and Spanish and Spanish-American Intercultural Knowledge

In this Paper, the candidates were asked to write three essays of 300-350 words each; two about literature and one about a cultural aspect of the Hispanic world.

The Examiners were pleased with the writing production of an excellent minority that showed a good command of the language and the literary works.

Overall, the majority showed an average capability to answer the three questions. However, there was a minority that could barely reach the required length and failed to express themselves effectively.

The preferred questions were those of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and *Rimas*. A good number also chose to answer the questions about *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* and *La familia de Pascual Duarte*. Only one person chose *La casa de los espíritus*.

Regarding Section B (Culture), most candidates chose the questions about the Spanish Constitution and the one about the social problems that Spain is currently facing. Some also chose to write about Latin American art.

Candidates produced better texts when answering questions about literature than those of culture. However, some of the candidates' analyses of Bécquer's poem were poor and did not meet the required standard and expectations at this level.

Many candidates made direct translations from Maltese or English, showed poor command of more complex forms and verbal structures, showed difficulties in distinguishing the uses of "ser" and "estar" and misused some basic prepositions.

However, overall, the majority presented well-structured texts and expressed themselves in a moderately coherent way. Ideas were organized effectively, and the most important points were included and appropriately expanded. Candidates used a variety of linking devices to connect their ideas.

Paper IV

Listening Comprehension

This Paper was divided into two sections. Candidates answered both parts in an acceptable way, however, it was evident that the second text was more challenging than the first one. Almost all candidates got 13 out of 15 or more in the first section, whereas the average mark obtained in the second part was 9 out of 15.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2018