

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

SPANISH

MAY 2017

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

**IM SPANISH
MAY 2017 SESSION
EXAMINER'S REPORT**

The table below illustrates the results obtained by the candidates who sat for the Intermediate Spanish Exam this year as well as the previous one. It represents the number and percentage of candidates and the grade they obtained in 2017 and 2016.

Table 1: Candidates' results in 2017 and 2016

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	Absent	Total
No. of candidates sitting for exam in 2017	3	3	3	7	6	3	2	27
% of candidates sitting for exam in 2017	11.1	11.1	11.1	25.9	22.2	11.1	7.5	100
No. of candidates sitting for exam in 2016	0	4	2	4	2	8	1	21
% of candidates sitting for exam in 2016	0	19	9.5	19	9.5	38.1	4.8	100

General Comments

The number of candidates sitting for this year's exam was slightly higher than that of last year. All scripts were seen by two markers and the Chairperson.

Focused Remarks

Oral – Picture Interpretation and Conversation

During the oral session, this year's candidates demonstrated high communicative competence. The candidates expressed themselves accurately, clearly and as intended. They could communicate effectively and speak appropriately using a wide range of vocabulary related to the topic and question. Most of the candidates were able to present their ideas adequately and concisely. However, some of them used Italian and many made grammatical mistakes, for example:

- The use of the Subjunctive: A lot of candidates tried to avoid using this grammatical mood by constructing very long and peculiar sentences.
- Verbal tenses: Many candidates did not conjugate the verbs in the correct verbal tense, mixing the present with the future as well as the *Pretérito Indefinido* and the *Pretérito Imperfecto*. They also conjugated the verbs in the wrong personal pronoun (subject).
- Article/ noun agreement: For example: *la problema, el bici, la día*.
- Muy/ Mucho: For example: *muy tráfico, muy gente, muy tecnología*.

Listening Comprehension

Overall, most of this year's candidates showed good listening skills and obtained a good mark in this part of the exam. The listening comprehension consisted of three parts. Most of the candidates were comfortable answering the first two sections, which involved reproducing words read out in the passage and selecting true or false statements. On the other hand, most of the candidates found it

difficult to answer the third part in which they were expected to complete four sentences from the information given in the passage. This indicates that some candidates found it difficult when it came to expressing their ideas in Spanish.

Essay Writing

While the majority of the candidates did fairly well in this component, the rest were of a level far below that expected at this level.

Candidates did not show any particular preference when it came to the choice of titles. Most of the candidates presented well-structured essays and knowledge of the writing conventions. With regards to the interactive writing component, titles number 1 and 4 were respectively requesting the candidates to write a complaint letter or an email to a classmate. Most of the candidates failed to show understanding on how to write a formal and informal letter/email in Spanish and how to address the recipient. Many wrote the recipient's name and address for the informal email to a friend, some wrote the date in English whilst others failed to conclude the letter/email with an adequate final salutation. Moreover, candidates' repeatedly mixed the two formulas in Spanish: *tú/vosotros, -as* and *usted/ustedes*.

Candidates made morphological mistakes in the conjugation of regular and irregular verbs in present and past tenses. They showed lack of knowledge on how to write in the future. The examiners were also surprised to notice that in many instances, candidates used only the Present Perfect for narrative texts. In this sense, the examiners would like to recall that the use of the Pretérito Perfecto in Spanish and English are slightly different, and that the correct use of the Pretérito Indefinido and Pretérito Imperfecto in Spanish in narrative texts is expected at this level. In some cases, candidates also mirrored English syntactic structures in their essays and ended sentences with prepositions.

Some candidates seemed to encounter great difficulties to express themselves in Spanish and used Italian to make up for their lexical deficiencies: *nel, mes prima, diritto, priorità, imparare, non, appuntamentos*. These examples were repeatedly found in their essays.

The examiners also noticed that there is still a lack of knowledge with regards to accents in Spanish. In general, they still confuse the relative pronouns: *como, que, cuando* with the interrogatives: *cómo, cuándo, qué*, and the subject pronoun: *tú* with the possessive *tu*, demonstrative and determinate articles: *este, esta* with the conjugation of the present tense (indicative and subjunctive mode) of the verb *estar*: *está, esté*, the affirmative adverb *sí* with the conditional conjunction *si*, and so on.

Consequently, the examiners would like to emphasise the importance of using the correct grammatical formulas as well as increasing their repertoire of words by reading and listening to authentic sources. They recommend candidates to choose topics that are familiar to them. Failing to do so may result in mediocre and very short texts.

Written Comprehension

This year, candidates' performance was better than last year. In general, they showed a good understanding of the text and tried to complete all the questions. Once again, the most challenging part for the candidates was answering open-ended questions. In general, the examiners were quite satisfied with the candidates' performance although some copied whole sentences from the passage, ignoring the introductory instructions, which explicitly stated that no marks will be given to those who copy four or more words directly from the text.

Language Use

As in previous years, the language use exercise proved to be quite challenging for the candidates. Question B.2.1. showed that candidates struggled with antonyms. Answers to B.2.2. and B.2.3 were in general acceptable.

Literary Texts and Cultural Themes

In this part of the exam, candidates were required to answer one question from the literature section or one question from the culture section. As in previous years, many candidates chose to answer the first question (C.1.1 a or b) about *La casa de Bernarda Alba*.

In general, candidates did not do very well in this exercise. Most of the essays were weak, showing a lack of understanding and reflection, as if they were the result of prepared model answers. With regards to the literature section, many wrote superficial descriptions rather than a profound analysis as was required in the question.

Moreover, most of the candidates did not answer the question or simply answered it partially. Quotes were not accurate and some texts were very short. Candidates also regurgitated the same ideas and words.

On the other hand, the few candidates who answered the culture section lacked specific knowledge of the topic, displaying very general content which could be applied not only to Spain but to many other countries in the world, for example: *España tiene muchos ríos, montañas, playas y calles estrechas*.

While most of the candidates wrote well-structured texts, erroneous information and grammatical mistakes were present in most of the essays. Even though literature essays focus more on the content rather than the form, candidates are expected to write their message clearly and accurately with the least possible spelling or grammatical mistakes.

*Chairperson
2017 Examination Panel*