

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

SPANISH

MAY 2015

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

EXAMINATIONS' BOARD

**SEC SPANISH
MAY 2015 SESSION
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

Three hundred and twenty-eight (328) candidates registered for the SEC Spanish examination.

The following Table outlines the candidates' distribution of grades:

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	26	40	49	51	22			24	9	221
PAPER B				13	20	21	18	34	1	107
TOTAL	26	40	49	64	42	21	18	58	10	328
% OF TOTAL	7.93	12.20	14.94	19.51	12.80	6.40	5.49	17.68	3.05	100

Paper I – Part 1 Listening Comprehension

A standard digital recording was used for the long and short listening comprehensions. The performance in the listening comprehension component was better than that in most of the other parts of the exam. The multiple choice task enables the candidates to focus fully on listening, understanding and matching answer to question. Knowledge of another Romance language aids the candidates with understanding the text thanks to the many lexical cognates, for example the following words which formed part of the correct answers: **la madre, el amor, aprecia, negro, defiende, la gente.**

Paper I – Part 2

In Paper I (Part 2), candidates performed well in the grammar questions. The most common error made was in Q 10 which points to the lack of knowledge of adverbs namely **aunque**. The candidates were generally well prepared for the Cultural Component section, possibly due to the brevity of the cultural component in the Spanish syllabus. There was a marked improvement in the Gap-Filling exercise this year. A word bank was provided with two extraneous words as in the past years. In this exercise most candidates demonstrated improved understanding skills; it was also the component where the candidates scored highest.

Papers 2A and 2B

- A. Reading Comprehension: performance in both papers was fair. The environmental topic of **el agua** was in keeping with the age and level of most candidates who were able to lift the correct answers from the text. Difficulties generally arose when candidates were asked to write answers in their own words, which is when the lack of correct syntax is penalised and marks are forfeited. Q 6 was an open-ended question which asked the candidate to explain in his/her own words what can or should be done to save water (En sus propias palabras explique qué puede o debe hacer Usted para conservar el agua). The answers could have been lifted from the text and conjugated in a different person (always in the present tense), but answers given were generally grammatically confusing and scattered. There were hardly any original discerning responses.

- B. Essay Task: this year as in the past, the essays were poor. There seems to be a downward spiral in this regard. The poor writing skills reflected lack of concentration, more than not knowing the language. Accents were arbitrarily placed or completely absent indicating unfamiliarity with accent rules. Most Paper A and Paper B candidates selected the title '**El país que más me gusta**'. The markers commented on the repetitiveness of the content, especially those that described Spain. Some sentences of different candidates were identical. Although it is not discouraged for candidates to memorise certain expressions, students should learn to write creatively in Spanish, especially at SEC level. Also as in previous years, there were a number of essays which were partly written in English, Italian and/or French. A number of others tried to adapt words from other languages. In this section of the exam, knowledge of another Romance language can cause interference and confusion, for example *oltras, l'arte, anche, paeses*. However lack of study and seriousness in the target language does fit into the equation, especially when agreement of subject, verb, adjective, gender and number is non-existent. Here it must be stressed that candidates who have good knowledge of a different Romance language cannot sit for the Spanish exam on just that basis. A couple of essays were written entirely in Italian where naturally a zero mark was awarded. A number of candidates seemed to have had no practice at all in writing essays in Spanish with most unable to complete the word limit of 200 in Paper A and 150 words in Paper B.
- C. Guided dialogue: considering the relatively easy level of the questions (basic greetings and school interaction) which are all an essential part of the syllabus, the inserted answers were carelessly incorrect.

It is strongly recommended that candidates study and learn the Spanish language rules well, as they cannot go by the Italian and French ones. Spanish is a separate and different language. To earn a good grade at SEC level, candidates should prepare themselves properly for this examination and then take advantage of the cognates in Romance languages they have already studied or are studying simultaneously.

*Chairperson
2015 Examination Panel*