



JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

2002

SPANISH

HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

This report, together with the marking scheme, aims to meet a need for clarification concerning the standards required for this examination and the type of answers required in the examination. It is hoped that this review will prove helpful to both teachers and students in their preparation for future examinations.

This year's examination scripts produced evidence of some outstanding work, particularly in the written production section. There are also, inevitably, some areas of weakness. This report aims to present both strengths and weaknesses in a constructive way, thereby helping both students and teachers to review progress.

Format of Examination

The Junior Certificate Examination in Spanish, at two levels, is comprised of four components: an optional oral examination, an aural test and a written paper containing both reading comprehension material and a written production section. The marks allocated are as follows:

	Higher	Ordinary
a) Part I: Listening Comprehension	140 marks	140 marks
b) Part I: Reading Comprehension	100 marks	120 marks
c) Part III: Written Expression	80 marks	60 marks
d) Oral examination (Optional)	<u>80 marks</u>	<u>80 marks</u>
Total	400 marks	400 marks

A total of **3** candidates availed of the optional oral examination this year, and all other candidates' scripts were marked from a possible total of **320** marks.

There are four sections in Part I, the Listening Comprehension:

A) dialogues, B) announcements, C) a news item and D) descriptive passages.

Part II (Reading Comprehension) consists of four sections and there are three sections in Part III (Written Expression).

2. PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES

HIGHER LEVEL

The total number of candidates for the Higher Level was **1,598**, an increase of **28.4%** on last year's candidature. As can be seen from Table Two, of these, 1,020 were female and 578 male. The following table shows the percentages of grades achieved in the last three years in the Junior Certificate Higher Level Spanish examination:

Table 1. Percentages of candidates achieving each grade in Higher Level Spanish in 2000-2002

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2000	1,510	9.7	23.5	31.9	28.3	5.6	0.9	0.1
2001	1,245	16.0	30.0	29.1	20.2	3.9	0.6	0.2
2002	1,598	16.9	31.0	30.3	17.0	3.7	1.1	0.0

As we can see from the above, **78.2%** of students obtained a Grade C or higher, 17% obtained a Grade D and 4.8% obtained a Grade E or lower in 2002. These figures are similar to the breakdown of grades for the year 2001.

The following Table shows the breakdown of grades by gender:

Table 2. Performance of Higher Level Candidates analyzed by Gender

	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
Female	1,020	209	346	293	139	24	9	0
%		20.5	33.9	28.7	13.6	2.4	0.9	0.0
%		83.1			13.6	3.3		
Male	578	61	150	191	133	35	8	0
%		10.6	26.0	33.0	23.0	6.1	1.4	0.0
%		69.6			23.0	7.5		

As is evident from the above table, 20.5% of female candidates and 10.6% of male candidates obtained an A Grade. A total of 83.1% of female candidates and 69.6% of male candidates obtained a Grade C or higher. The percentage of female candidates obtaining a Grade D was 13.6% and the percentage of male candidates obtaining a Grade D was 23%. The percentages of candidates obtaining a Grade E or lower were 3.3% for girls and 7.5% for boys.

ORDINARY LEVEL

The total number of candidates for the Ordinary Level was **747**, an increase of **17.6%** on last year's candidature. As can be seen from Table Four, of these, 426 were male and 321 female. The following table shows the percentages of grades achieved in the last three years in the Junior Certificate Ordinary Level Spanish examination:

Table 3. Percentages of candidates achieving each grade in Ordinary Level Spanish in 2000-2002

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2000	786	2.8	26.3	33.8	26.1	8.0	2.7	0.3
2001	635	6.9	33.2	34.5	18.7	5.2	1.1	0.3
2002	747	3.5	21.6	35.1	27.4	9.8	2.4	0.3

The percentage of students obtaining a Grade C or higher at Ordinary Level was **60.2%** and the percentage of candidates obtaining a Grade E or lower was 12.5%. There was an increase in the failure rate this year, which was due partly to the fact that quite a large number of candidates did not attempt the written expression part of the examination. The sample returns show that 10% of candidates did not attempt any of the questions in Part III of the paper and another 24% did not attempt one or two questions in the section.

The following table shows the breakdown of grades by gender:

Table 4. Performance of Ordinary Level Candidates analyzed by Gender

	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
Female	321	13	90	132	68	17	1	0
%		4.0	28.0	41.1	21.2	5.3	0.3	0.0
%		73.1			21.2	5.6		
Male	426	13	71	130	137	56	17	2
%		3.1	16.7	30.5	32.2	13.1	4.0	0.5
%		50.3			32.2	17.6		

From the above table, it is evident that a total of 73.1% of female candidates and 50.3% of male candidates obtained a Grade C or higher. The percentage of female candidates obtaining a Grade E or lower was 5.6% for girls and 17.6% for boys.

3. ANALYSIS OF CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE: HIGHER LEVEL

The detailed analysis of candidates' performance in the different sections of the examination, which now follows, is best read in conjunction with the published marking scheme, which can be downloaded from the Department of Education and Science web site, www.education.ie

PART I: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

(Note: All of the following statistics relating to individual questions or sections in the examination were obtained from the sample returns.)

Some of the listening comprehension exercises were quite demanding but most students performed well overall. The average mark was 67% for this section of the paper. It was evident, however, that numerals continue to cause problems for a large number of candidates.

Generally, questions requiring the candidate to demonstrate an understanding of numbers were not well answered. Some students lost marks by misreading question words or not providing enough detail in their answers. Of all four sections, Section D proved the most challenging.

Section A. Diálogos

This section was well answered by most candidates. The average mark for Section A was almost 79%.

The first dialogue caused no great problems for students, apart from the word *cruz*, which some did not recognize.

A small number of students lost marks in the second dialogue by confusing the number *quince* with *cinco* and *julio* with *junio*.

In the third dialogue, some candidates lost marks by not reading the questions carefully.

In the last dialogue, *En el mercado*, very few candidates understood *uvas*, but were awarded marks for being able to describe the special offer.

Section B. Unos Anuncios

More challenging than Section A, the average mark for Section B was 62.5%.

The weather forecast caused problems for quite a few candidates who did not recognize the expressions *las temperaturas van a bajar* and *va a llover*. Again there was confusion with numbers, with some students mixing up *doce* with *dos* and *cuatro* with *catorce* and *cuarenta*.

Questions on the Department Store announcement were well answered, but few candidates got full marks for (b) as they did not recognize the phrase *el día de la madre*. Some students did not understand the word *flores*.

Question 3 was well answered and caused no great problem for candidates. In Question 4, only very few candidates understood the expression *equipo de debate* and, surprisingly, other candidates did not recognize *el periódico*.

Section C. Una Noticia

This news item about a forest fire was very well answered. Some students did not recognize *móvil* but recognized *teléfono*. The average mark obtained was 65%.

Section D. Descriptivo

This first part of Section D proved to be an effective discriminator and separated out the A and B candidates. The questions were challenging and proved quite difficult for students who were listening for specific words rather than to the general meaning. Some candidates' answers were too vague and lacked the necessary details. Words like *madrileños* and *edad (de los estudiantes)* posed problems for some students.

The second part about the Port Aventura theme park was less problematic for candidates, with most candidates answering (a) and (b) well. Most students got one answer correct in both (c) and (d), while *salvaje oeste*, *pueblo pesquero italiano* and *trenes (de vapor)* caused problems for some students. The average mark for Section D was 62%.

PART II: READING COMPREHENSION

In Part II of the paper the average mark was 74%, which shows that the majority of candidates performed well in this section.

Section A of Part II of the paper caused no difficulty for 60% of candidates who answered all questions correctly. The average mark was 8.7 out of a possible 10 marks.

Section B: The average mark for this Section was 71%.

Question 1 was surprisingly badly answered by many candidates, many of whom did not recognize the words *cambio*, *taquilla* (a *drink* was the most common answer here), or *horno*. Others confused *jabón* with *jamón*.

Question 2 was very well answered with practically all candidates describing three features of the watch correctly.

Question 3 caused no real difficulty – items number 3, 4 and 6 were the most commonly chosen pieces of advice, with practically no-one choosing number 5. Some students lost half marks for communicating half the message.

In **Question 4**, very few candidates mentioned snow-sports in (c) as they missed the word *nieve*. Otherwise the questions were well answered.

In **Question 5** there was, again, confusion with numbers (*dieciseis* and *diecisiete*). A number of students did not understand the words *sonrisa* or *sonreir* and used the pictures as their guide. *Una media* also caused some confusion as some candidates translated it as meaning *a half* in this context.

The questions on the article about dogs were answered well by nearly all candidates, in spite of quite demanding vocabulary.

Section C: The comprehension passages in this section of the paper demanded more detailed answers than in Section B. It was noted by examiners that some candidates lost marks either by not reading the questions carefully or by giving incomplete answers. Other candidates lost marks by skimming over the text too quickly in order to answer the questions – often picking out the wrong word or piece of information, as they had not fully read the text. The average mark for Section C was 77%.

Question 1 was quite a demanding article but the questions were accessible to most candidates. Students answered (a) and (b) well and, while only the minority understood the word *escaparate* in question (c), quite a few managed to give the idea of visitors watching the penguins behind some sort of partition. A large number of candidates lost marks in (d) by not mentioning the penguin eggs.

The article on Ana Belén (**Question 2**) was well answered on the whole – very few candidates mentioned *equilibrada* in question (d), opting instead for *a sense of humour*.

The last three questions on the Wembley article were well answered, but (a) and (b) caused difficulty for quite a few candidates. Some did not pick out the phrase *fue demolido* and others did not relate the *triste funeral* to the rain or to the fact that the local team lost the match.

Section D: The average mark for this section was approximately 68%.

The dialogue posed some difficulties for a minority of candidates, but most answered the questions well. While (d) and (e) were quite challenging, the first three questions caused no real problem for candidates. In (f), many students did not understand *bajar esta mesa*, while nearly all understood *lava el coche*.

The second text about Cabo Verde proved an effective discriminator and while candidates who achieved an A or B overall had no difficulty here, questions (c), (d), (e) and (f) caused problems for a number of students. Some candidates recognized words like *económica* and *política* but failed to convey the full meaning of their context.

PART III: WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Assistant Examiners noted that the written production section of the paper was well answered by a large number of candidates. It was reassuring to note that many of these students produced written work of a very high standard. However there are still many candidates who are under-performing in this section of the paper. Sections B and C, in particular, reveal the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. The overall average mark for Part III was 50%.

Section A: The average mark here was 66%. The most common mistakes were spelling errors in (a), (d) and (e).

Section B: This exercise, together with the letter in Section C, showed a wide range in the standard of work presented. The average mark was just under 39% for this section. While many candidates showed good ability in their use of language, others failed to communicate the required message through a lack of vocabulary and absence of basic grammatical structures.

Verbs continue to cause difficulty for many candidates, with many students either using an incorrect verb or using the infinitive of the verb inappropriately. It is expected that candidates at this level would be familiar with the following vocabulary:

*Tengo que; volver; después del partido;
voy a levantarme; temprano; mañana por la mañana;
hice; deberes; anoche;
mandar/enviar; un (tarjeta) postal; a Irlanda.*

Section C: Again, in this section, there was a wide range in the standard of work presented. Some students produced excellent letters, using idiomatic phrases, appropriate verbs and a good range of vocabulary. Other candidates, however, had a limited range of vocabulary and communicative tasks were not fulfilled. The average mark for the letter was 54%.

Points 1 and 6 did not require development, but candidates were expected to develop points 2 to 5. Some candidates lost marks by not fulfilling the communicative tasks specified in the letter.

As marks are allocated for each task, it is important to stress to the students at this level that they should include all of the points mentioned. Examiners noted the following characteristics from high scoring letters and these may be of use to students preparing for this question:

- Correct greeting and conclusion.
- Good opening phrases – able to apologize for not writing sooner / inquire about someone’s wellbeing / give regards to someone.
- Good grammatical and verb knowledge – correct use of tenses in present, future and past tenses.
- Development of specific points – use of a variety of verbs.
- More extensive vocabulary – use of idiomatic phrases – varied content.
- Good closing phrases.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (HIGHER LEVEL)

- The Listening Comprehension was well attempted by the majority of students. However, students must be reminded to read questions carefully and to give full details when answering questions.
- Many students need to improve their ability to recognize numbers and dates. Consistent use of the target language and games/activities which provide practice with numerals and dates in the classroom are recommended.
- Many students are unable to use common verbs in the present, future and past tenses. For many students, basic grammar proficiency is an area which needs to be addressed.
- It was noted by examiners that some students have a very limited range of vocabulary. Regular assessment of the students’ range of vocabulary is advisable. Discussing different strategies for learning vocabulary with individual students can be helpful.

- Students should be reminded to read complete extracts carefully and to base their answers on the actual text. Some candidates do not give the full information required, or give additional information which is not mentioned in the text.
- Examiners have made a plea this year, as in other years, that students should not write their answers to either the aural or written paper in pencil.

5. ANALYSIS OF CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE: ORDINARY LEVEL

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PART I: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

(Note: All of the following statistics relating to individual questions or sections in the examination were obtained from the sample returns.)

Although parts of the listening comprehension section of the examination proved difficult for candidates, the average mark obtained was just over 50%. While both Ordinary and Higher level candidates listen to the same tape, the questions are graded according to level, but it is becoming evident that Ordinary level candidates find the more demanding passages quite difficult.

Section A. Diálogos

This section was well answered although some candidates did have problems with numbers (i.e., confusing *quince* with *cinco*) and a small number of students did not recognize *viernes*. Most candidates handled question 3 satisfactorily with the exception of 3(c), where many candidates misread the question and ticked the item which was lost. In 4(a) few candidates wrote *apples* but they were awarded marks for writing *fruit*. The average score in Section A was just over 53%.

Section B. Unos Anuncios

This section was generally answered quite well with the exception of 2(a) and 3(b), both of which caused difficulty. A small number of candidates did not recognize the phrase *a las diez* in 2(a) and *argentino* in 3(b). Very few candidates understood *equipo de debate* in Question 4 and some had difficulty with *miércoles* in 4(b).

Section C. Una Noticia

This section was well answered by most students, although those who have difficulty with numerals and days of the week scored badly here. The average mark scored here was 47%.

Section D. Descriptivo

This section was the most difficult one for candidates overall. The first question was very demanding for candidates in general while Question 2 proved less problematic. The topic in Question 1 was difficult and demanded much concentration. 1(a) and (b) were answered correctly by a small number of candidates, while 1(c) caused difficulty for most. In Question 2 very few candidates recognized the word *lago*, thus losing marks in 2(d). Most candidates answered (e) correctly.

PART II: READING COMPREHENSION

Section A of the Reading Comprehension caused no problems for the majority of candidates who scored well here. The average mark was 73%.

Section B:

Question 1 (a) was well answered while in (b), only half of the candidates correctly understood *permiso de trabajo*.

The vast majority of candidates answered **Question 2** correctly and **Question 3** caused no great problems, apart from the word *taquillas*.

Question 4 was more problematic, with many students confusing what was available on the different floors of the hotel. Surprisingly few candidates understood the phrase *Habitaciones no fumadores*. Some candidates did not attempt (c) at all.

Question 5 caused difficulty for most students, although some candidates did get full marks here. Examiners noted that many picked out a familiar word and guessed the rest. Others did not recognize the food items mentioned in the text.

Question 6 (a) was answered correctly by the majority of candidates, with most getting the idea that doña Cristina had returned to work after the holiday, but very few answered (b) and (c) correctly. Although the text may have looked quite long, the answers were quite accessible for candidates. Surprisingly few students recognized the word for hair, *pelo*, or the colour *amarillo* within the text to enable them to answer the last two questions.

Section C:

The article on Penelope Cruz was dealt with overall very well with no great difficulty. In **Question 2**, some answered the question about Arnold Schwarzenegger's age badly, confusing numbers. Most managed to give the idea that he had become involved in politics for the answer to 2 (b). **Question 3** was reasonably well answered while **Questions 4** (a) and (b) caused difficulty for many candidates. In question (a), a large number of students did not know the meaning of the word *madrileño*, and in question 2 (b) very few got full details, but were awarded marks for anything which suggested a detective story, murder, or police investigation. The average mark for Section C was 67.5%.

Section D:

The dialogue was more demanding for candidates than the article on Lanzarote.

In **Question 1(a)** of the dialogue, many students did not give the correct time, and others had difficulty with the phrase *después del recreo*. (The words *antes* and *después* are often confused at this level and are usually crucial to the meaning of the text.) Questions 1(b) and (c) were mostly well answered, but quite a number of candidates just gave the answer '*has to go out*' leaving out the word '*shopping*' in 1(d).

Although the vocabulary in **Question 2** was quite demanding, the majority of questions were answered correctly. The last question caused some difficulty but overall the text, together with the questions, was accessible to candidates. The average mark for this section was just under 54%.

PART III: WRITTEN EXPRESSION

The written production section of the paper is always the most demanding for candidates and in this year's examination the overall average mark for this section was 39%.

This figure includes a substantial number of candidates who did not attempt either all or some of the questions. The sample returns show that 10% did not attempt any of the questions in Part III and another 24% left out either one or two of the questions in this section. This is a matter for concern, as it was evident that a large number of students were unable to write quite basic Spanish. Examiners report that there were some examination centres this year where a large number of candidates presenting for the examination failed to attempt the written expression section of the paper.

Section A. Of the sample, just over 18% did not attempt this question. Of those who did, the average mark obtained was just over 50%. Few candidates scored full marks due mainly to spelling errors, - this was especially noticeable in (b) and in (c) with many candidates writing *primero* instead of *primer* - but many made a good attempt. While there is some leeway for minor spelling errors, candidates are expected to be familiar with *dates, times and numerals* in general, for this section of the paper.

Section B. Approximately 24% of the cohort did not attempt this question at all. Many more candidates did not complete all of the section. Of the candidates who attempted either some or all of the section, the average mark obtained was 43 %. Examiners reported that while most of these students were able to produce the vocabulary needed for these sentences, they often lacked the verbs and tenses to convey the message.

In (a), some candidates confused *invierno* with *verano* and few were able to express the idea of '*always*'. The verb *ser* was often used instead of *estar* in question (b). Most candidates who attempted (c) answered it well. While many students chose the correct verb for (d), quite a few were unable to use it in the past tense. In question (e), while most candidates successfully used *¿Cuántos años?*, many did not use *tienes*.

Section C. The average mark for those who attempted the letter was 56%. Almost 21% of the candidates included in the sample returns did not attempt this question at all.

Candidates were asked to include four of the points given. A number of candidates were able to introduce and end the letter suitably and expressed the first point well. However, verb tenses posed problems for a large proportion of candidates who were unable to express events in the past or the future. Marks were awarded to students if some or any of the message was conveyed coherently.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (ORDINARY LEVEL)

- Candidates find it hard to identify *numbers* in listening comprehension tests. More listening practice is needed for numbers, dates and times. Consistent use of the target language as the language of the classroom should help in this regard.
- Some students lack very basic vocabulary such as days of the week, seasons, colours, food, months and shopping vocabulary. Looking at different ways of learning vocabulary and regular assessment are two strategies to be recommended.
- Candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions. It should be explained to them that even incomplete answers carry a proportion of the total marks and that no marks can be awarded if nothing is written.
- Care should be taken when reading questions – students are still losing marks by not reading the questions carefully.
- It is evident that much work needs to be done on verbs – many candidates at this level are unable to use common verbs in either the present, past or future tenses.
- Examiners have made a plea this year, as in other years, that students should not write their answers to either the aural or written paper in pencil.