



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2010

SPANISH

**ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

CONTENTS

	Page
1. General Introduction	3
1.1 Background to the Report	
1.2 Content of Spanish Leaving Certificate Examinations	
1.3 2010 Leaving Certificate Examinations	
1.4 Numbers of candidates taking Spanish from 2007 to 2010	
1.5 Grades achieved by candidates from 2007 to 2010	
2. Oral Examination, Ordinary Level and Higher Levels	7
2.1 Introduction	
2.2 Performance of candidates	
2.3 Analysis of candidate performance	
2.4 Conclusions	
2.5 Recommendations	
3. Ordinary Level Written and Aural	12
3.1 Introduction	
3.2 Analysis of candidate performance	
3.3 Conclusions	
3.4 Recommendations	
4. Higher Level Written and Aural	19
4.1 Introduction	
4.2 Analysis of candidate performance	
4.3 Conclusions	
4.4 Recommendations	

1. General Introduction

1.1 Background to the Report

This report should be read in conjunction with the examinations papers, the CD and the published marking schemes for the 2010 Leaving Certificate Spanish Ordinary Level and Higher Level examinations. These are available on the State Examination Commission's website www.examinations.ie.

The current Spanish Syllabus was examined for the first time in 1997. The most recent Chief Examiner's Report for Leaving Certificate Spanish, Ordinary Level and Higher Level, was on the 2006 examinations.

1.2 Content of Spanish Leaving Certificate Examinations

Both Ordinary Level and Higher Level have four main components:

- Oral Examination
- Reading Comprehension
- Written Production
- Aural (Listening Comprehension)

Allocation of Marks.

Both the Ordinary Level and Higher Level Examinations carry 400 marks that are allocated to the various components as follows:

Level	Oral	Written (Reading Comprehension & Written Production)	Aural (Listening Comprehension)
Ordinary	80 (20%)	220 (55%)	100 (25%)
Higher	100 (25%)	220 (55%)	80 (20%)

Table 1: Allocation of marks.

1.3 2010 Leaving Certificate Examinations

The oral examination is common to both Ordinary Level and Higher Level. In 2010 this component was examined in the two weeks between April 12th and April 23rd. All candidate tests were recorded on cassette tape by the examiners. In turn, these recordings were monitored in May 2010 and a moderation process carried out. Subsequently, an Appeals Process was activated in September 2010 for those candidates who appealed their results.

The reading, written and aural components of the examinations were taken together in a two and a half hour examination on Friday, 22nd June, 2010. The format of the examinations is such that it begins with the reading and written components at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level from 9.30 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. Candidates have a short break and then sit the 40 minute Listening Comprehension Test from 12.10 p.m. to 12.50 p.m.

1.4 Numbers of Candidates sitting Spanish in the period 2007 - 2010

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
Ordinary Level	1127	1373	1419	1586
Higher Level	1533	1592	1858	2059
Total	2660	2965	3277	3645

Table 2: Numbers of Leaving Certificate candidates taking Spanish 2007-2010.

The numbers of candidates taking Spanish have grown by 37% over the past four years, continuing a trend over the previous four years. The total numbers taking Spanish for the Leaving Certificate passed the 3000 mark for the first time in 2008 and are set to pass the 4000 mark in 2011 or 2012. In 2010, more than 2000 candidates took Spanish at Higher Level alone.

1.5 Grades achieved by candidates taking Spanish from 2007 to 2010

1.5.1 Ordinary Level

Year	Total	A	B	C	A+B+C	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2007	1127	1.8	26.9	36.5	65.2	26.5	6.6	1.7	0.2	8.5
2008	1373	4.3	31.8	33.2	69.3	23.9	5.1	1.5	0.2	6.8
2009	1419	4.3	26.9	37.7	68.9	24.9	4.7	1.6	0.0	6.3
2010	1586	4.6	29.2	35.9	69.7	22.1	5.8	2.1	0.2	8.1

Table 3: Grades in Leaving Certificate Spanish (Ordinary Level) 2007-2010
(Grade data represents percentages.)

Comment

The final results of Spanish at Ordinary Level show that the combined ABC grades have improved from 65.2% in 2007 to 69.7% in 2010. D grades have decreased (22.1% in 2010 v 26.5% in 2007) and the EFNG grades have also declined since 2007.

These figures show an increase of 40% in the number of candidates sitting Spanish at Ordinary Level for the Leaving Certificate over the past four years.

1.5.2 Higher Level

Year	Total	A	B	C	A+B+C	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2007	1533	13.7	27.9	37.7	79.3	19.5	1.0	0.1	0.0	1.1
2008	1592	15.9	34.3	31.8	82.0	16.7	1.3	0.1	0.0	1.4
2009	1858	14.5	30.5	35.9	80.9	17.1	1.8	0.2	0.0	2.0
2010	2059	17.4	33.8	32.0	83.2	15.1	1.4	0.3	0.0	1.4

Table 4: Grades in Leaving Certificate Spanish (Higher Level) 2007-2010
(Grade data represent percentages.)

Comment

The percentages of candidates achieving ABC grades have increased marginally as the numbers have continued to grow, reflecting an improvement in the cohort presenting for the examination at this level.

These figures show an increase of 34% in the number of candidates sitting Spanish at Higher Level for the Leaving Certificate over the past four years.

2. Oral Examination, Ordinary Level and Higher Level

2.1 Introduction

The Leaving Certificate Oral Examination in Spanish is common to Ordinary Level and Higher Level. Marks are allocated as follows:

Ordinary Level	80 marks
Higher Level	100 marks

The oral examination accounts for 20% of overall marks at Ordinary Level and 25% of marks at Higher Level and is conducted in the same way for Ordinary Level and Higher Level candidates.

The Oral Examination of each candidate is recorded and retained for monitoring purposes and thus allows for the inclusion of performance in the oral examination in the appeals process in September and October.

The oral examination consists of two distinct parts:

Section A

General Conversation **70 marks**

Section B

Role-Play **25 marks**

The candidate's performance is assessed on communicative competence, pronunciation, fluency, range of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy.

The oral examination consists of a one-to-one interview with an oral examiner lasting approximately fifteen minutes. The General Conversation lasts a minimum of ten minutes while the role-play takes 3-4 minutes.

2.2 Performance of candidates

Most examiners reported that the majority of candidates were well prepared for the General Conversation section of the oral examination and, as a result, their ability to hold a natural conversation in the target language and to adapt to the various topics introduced was impressive. Candidates showed great enthusiasm, confidence and a willingness to communicate. Examiners felt that there was a significant improvement in recent years in the fluency of the candidates and a much greater self-assurance in their ability to express themselves. Nevertheless, examiners noted that some candidates gave less successful responses and that in some schools candidates found the role-plays, in particular, quite challenging.

Some candidates, in reproducing learned-off material for the examination, concentrated so hard on recalling the information that pronunciation and communication suffered. Candidates who performed less well, or those who had insufficiently prepared for the examination, showed difficulty understanding some of the questions, even quite basic ones. These candidates tended to give very short and frequently inaccurate answers. It has to be stressed that the candidate's ability and willingness to elaborate on the various topics introduced by the examiner is the most significant factor in performing well in this section.

2.3 Analysis of candidate performance

2.3.1 Literary Option within the General Conversation

No student took up this option.

2.3.2 General Conversation

As already stated, satisfaction was expressed by examiners at the standard of the majority of candidates in the General Conversation. Though some candidates may have had difficulty with some grammatical structures, sometimes used inaccurate language and did not always have the necessary vocabulary to express themselves as they would have wished, the majority of candidates showed a willingness and enthusiasm to communicate. Candidates spoke on a wide range of topics and showed an ability to engage with the examiner. They spoke on family, school, pastimes/hobbies, plans for the future, trips and exchanges to Spain, cultural differences between Ireland and Spain and on other topics that arose in the course of the conversation. The three principal reasons for losing marks were a) insufficient vocabulary b) lack of ability to structure sentences and c) over-reliance on memorised material.

2.3.3 Role-Play

The role-play tests potentially real situations which candidates might encounter with native speakers in Spain. Examiners reported that candidates who were well prepared and who were familiar with the materials, performed very well in this section. Some interacted very competently with the examiner as they worked through the role-play. Others, with more limited command of language, also gained high marks in this section because of thorough classroom preparation.

A small percentage of candidates, due to insufficient preparation perhaps, gave the impression that they were seeing the materials for the first time - they lacked the vocabulary and grammatical structures to complete the task successfully. These candidates showed difficulties forming full sentences, often skipping whole sections. Invariably, they had difficulty with the last 'turn' of the role-play, often giving just a *Sí* or *No* answer.

Many examiners commented on the fact that a significant percentage of candidates in the lower mark range in the General Conversation, achieved very good marks in the role-play, indicating that there wasn't always a correlation between performance in the General Conversation and performance in the role-play. It was felt that candidates who scored poorly had either not received sufficient relevant instruction or had not prepared sufficiently themselves. Another issue arising with the role-play was evident with a few native speakers attending school where Spanish was not on the curriculum. Some of these candidates were unaware of the existence of role-plays and therefore struggled with them. The most difficult thing for them was that in some cases they did not understand the English on the Candidate Card and consequently made mistakes in Spanish.

2.3.4 Problems noted by Examiners

- Candidates were often unsure of when to use *ser* or *estar*
- answering questions that were not asked
- answering questions with chunks of learnt-off answers in such a way as to block development of a natural conversation
- incorrect use of articles, prepositions and possessive pronouns
- responding to a question from the Examiner by repeating the same form of the verb
- non agreement of adjectives and nouns
- many candidates had difficulty responding appropriately to questions posed in the past tenses
- incorrect use of conditional
- only using *voy a ir* for the future
- lack of the necessary vocabulary to deal with basic topics e.g. school, pastimes etc
- not using subjunctive where required.

2.4 Conclusions

- The vast majority of examiners commented on the high quality of spoken Spanish shown by a significant number of candidates in the General Conversation section. They made a genuine effort to use the Spanish they had and communicated fluently and spontaneously on a wide range of topics and issues
- candidates who were well prepared, generally achieved very good marks for the role-play
- the role-play is a useful task to help students develop vocabulary and narrative skills
- examiners were sometimes perplexed by the continuing problem of candidates' over-reliance on memorised material.

2.5 Recommendations

2.5.1 Recommendations to teachers

- Speak as much Spanish as possible in the classroom. Oral communication attunes the student's ear to the language
- encourage students to practise Spanish among themselves
- include an oral component in all tests from First Year
- encourage individuality in answers by getting students to express their own personality/ tell their own, individual story - not merely to give learned-off answers
- encourage the students to elaborate and to avoid *Sí* or *No* responses
- reinforce basic vocabulary as often as possible
- give students practice in the use of all tenses, in particular the preterite, future and conditional
- train the students to listen carefully to the oral examiner and to respond to what the examiner says
- ask questions in a variety of ways so that students are not put off by the wording of questions
- remind students that good preparation for the oral examination is good preparation for the written examinations in June
- practise the pronunciation of commonly mispronounced words
- encourage students to conduct and record interviews on various topics as a class based activity
- ensure that Higher Level students are able to give the pros and cons of various issues
- if there are mock examinations being organised in the school, try to arrange for an oral component to be timetabled also. Record students' examinations if

possible and allow them to listen to the recordings and to identify where there is room for improvement

- encourage students to go on exchanges/visits in Spanish-speaking countries.
- apply to act as an oral examiner for the Leaving Certificate Oral Examinations as it can be useful for your professional development.

2.5.2 Recommendations to students

- Speak as much Spanish as possible in the classroom
- listen to Spanish in as many ways as you can by listening to CDs, watching films/DVDs and Spanish television programmes
- devote time to learning basic grammar and vocabulary
- practise verb forms and tenses
- avoid tendency to recite large pieces of Spanish during oral examination
- if possible, go on a Spanish exchange
- develop your answers in the oral examination so that they are not just *Sí* or *No* answers
- be spontaneous and natural in your answers and treat the General Conversation section as a normal conversation in which the examiner is interested in finding out about you and your interests and opinions
- be familiar with **all** five Role-Plays, not just a favourite one
- remember that good preparation for the oral examination is good preparation for your written examination in June.

3. Ordinary Level Written and Aural

3.1 Introduction

The Spanish Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate examination comprises four components:

Oral Production	80 marks
Reading Comprehension	160 marks
Written Production	60 marks
Listening Comprehension/Aural	100 marks

Numbers taking Spanish at Ordinary Level:

Year	Total	% of total Spanish candidature
2007	1127	42.4%
2008	1373	46.3%
2009	1419	43.3%
2010	1586	43.5%

Table 5: percentage of total Spanish candidature Leaving Certificate 2010

Written Paper

The Written Paper contains two sections – **Section A** tests reading comprehension and **Section B** tests written production.

Section A	Section B	Total
160 marks	60 marks	220 marks
50+25+20+25+40	40+20	220

Table 6: Breakdown of marks Ordinary Level Comprehension & Written Production

Section A: 160 Marks

This Section consists of five reading comprehensions of varying levels of difficulty. The first comprehension has a series of questions in Spanish which must be answered in Spanish. The subsequent comprehensions have questions in English or Irish which are answered in English or Irish. All the reading comprehensions must be attempted. The marks were allocated as follows:

Question 1	50 marks
Question 2	25 marks
Question 3	20 marks
Question 4	25 marks
Question 5	40 marks

Section B: 60 Marks

This Section consists of two questions. Question One is an informal letter which is written in Spanish and is a compulsory item. The second question has two parts and candidates may choose between writing a note and writing a diary entry.

Listening Comprehension/Aural Test: 80 Marks

The Listening Comprehension had seven parts divided as follows:

1. *Un anuncio*
2. *Diálogo*
3. *Diálogo*
4. *Descriptivo*
5. *Descriptivo*
6. *El Tiempo*
7. *Una noticia*

3.2. Analysis of Candidate Performance

[See table in General Introduction to this report.]

3.2.1. Oral Production

A comprehensive account of the functioning of the oral component appears at the beginning of this report.

3.2.2. Reading Comprehension

Question 1. *Una mujer extraordinaria*

This was well answered in the main, giving candidates a chance to gain a large amount of marks but errors were, nevertheless, common and avoidable.

Excessive and irrelevant quotation (i.e. over-transcription) adversely affected candidate performance to a considerable extent. This was evident in particular in parts (e) and (f).

In part (c) candidates gave the seemingly obvious answer of *Etiopía* and did not recognise *en un orfanato* as the correct answer.

In (d) very few candidates got the full answer of *la adaptó y la llevó a Madrid*, most just giving *la adaptó* for 3 marks.

Part (g) was well answered. Candidates who lost marks did not understand *sabe*.

In (h) many candidates did not understand *Sacó muy buenas notas*.

Many candidates did not get (i), because they did not understand the word *dice* and therefore did not associate it with the quotation marks. A common incorrect answer was *A ella le encanta usar el Internet porque puede hablar por teléfono, chatear, leer y pedir un taxi*.

Another word that many candidates were unable to understand was *incapacidades*.

Question 2. *Se vende el guardarropa de Audrey Hepburn*

Part (a) was well answered.

In (b) many candidates did not recognise *Bélgica* or failed to translate it, while others opted for *Londres* or guessed the USA.

Part (c) was difficult with many not getting *sombrero*.

In (d) *vestido* was often understood as ‘vest’ or ‘top’.

Question 3. *Alberto, un loro muy inteligente, encontrado muerte en el laboratorio*

This question was answered very well by most candidates.

In (a) some did not understand *el viernes pasado*. In many cases *viernes* was understood as ‘Thursday’, ‘winter’ or ‘summer’. ‘Last Friday’ was needed for full marks.

In (b) numbers in their written form were not always understood but candidates did very well with *diferenciar*, *distinguir* and *contra*.

Part (c) was answered well.

Question 4. *Un niño mexicano se pega a la cama*

This question allowed most candidates to score marks.

In (a) *colegio* was occasionally misunderstood as college and not as ‘school’ and, similarly, in (b) *zapatos* was understood to mean ‘runners’ or ‘trainers’ rather than ‘shoes’.

In (c) *vecinos* was not known by many but most did well in (d).

Part (e) was often left blank.

Question 5. *Los peligros de montar en bicicleta en Madrid*

Generally well answered, with most candidates scoring 20 or more marks.

While many did not understand *multa*, most knew that he had to pay money.

Candidates generally coped well with parts (b), (c) and (d).

In (e) *padre* was occasionally understood as ‘parents’.

3.2.3. Written Production

Those candidates who did well in this section of the paper were well prepared by their teachers. Candidates demonstrated good vocabulary, sentence structure and word order. They showed accuracy in grammar, particularly, use of tenses and were attentive to the detail required for each point.

Candidates who were not as strong in the above areas, nevertheless, scored well by trying to get the gist of the message across. Unfortunately, some candidates did not

attempt any part of this section of the examination, thus endangering their chances of attaining even a D grade. Over recent years this number has been falling.

Question 1. Informal Letter/E-mail

The Letter/E-mail has five ‘turns’ all of which must be attempted. It was obvious from some of the high quality answers that many candidates had studied for the Higher Level examination but had opted, for varying reasons, to take the Ordinary Level. These well-prepared candidates scored high marks in this section of the paper. Less able candidates who attempted this part of the examination scored marks for effort and ability to communicate the message, albeit in some cases exhibiting difficulties with grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Examiners commented that these efforts were commendable and indicative of candidates’ determination to do their best.

In the first ‘turn’ some candidates had difficulty with the future. When *tienda* was not known, *supermercado/mercado* was offered. Many did not know *verano* or misspelt it. Difficulty denoting possession, *la tienda de mi padre*, was very common.

In the second many more found the two past tenses challenging.

The third and fourth points were well answered, although many did not get adjectival and verbal agreement.

In the fifth point some candidates could not spell *septiembre* and a much greater number found *vacaciones* even more of an obstacle.

Question 2(a). Message

This was well answered by most. It was much more popular amongst the less able candidates.

Estar used instead of *ser* for the first point.

Difficulties were encountered with the spelling of *bocadillos*, *fruta* and *zumos*.

Words such as *también* and *allí* were frequently not known.

‘Later’ was often attempted with *tarde*.

Question 2(b). Diary Entry

The biggest difficulties were with the third point. Many candidates found *el único problema* and *siempre* challenging, while some did not know *fumar*.

3.2.4. Listening Comprehension/Aural

It is heartening to note that candidates are improving year-on-year at this section of the examination. This is testament to the hard work in the classroom and the priority given to both aural and oral work by the teachers of Spanish. These teachers are increasingly au fait with modern media and determined to integrate same into the classroom. This covers elements as diverse as the internet, satellite television, Spanish films, Spanish DVDs and Spanish CDs. All help to improve the performance of candidates in the aural and oral section of the examination, regardless of the level taken.

It has to be pointed out that marks were sometimes lost by questions being left blank or, more frequently, by incomplete answers. Answers in Spanish are not allowed.

Juegos Olímpicos de 2016: la decepción española

Generally few problems except for (a) where many candidates failed to get full marks by answering only 'September' instead of also including 'last'.

Diálogo: El uniforme escolar

Many scored full marks here, perhaps due to very good preparation for the oral examination. For some 'caro' was not understood.

Diálogo: Entrevista con el Sr. Zapatero, presidente del gobierno español

Generally well answered. Candidates lost marks by giving only one or two parts of the date.

In (c) many put down the wrong language or gave both languages and therefore lost marks.

Descriptivo: España manda ayuda humanitaria a Haití

- (a) Most candidates managed to score some marks
- (b) Only a small number recognised *ayer*.
- (c) Some candidates chose the wrong number.

Descriptivo: Una encuesta

Most candidates did very well at this question with 12 being the average mark.

El tiempo

Although this is a regular part of the examination, some candidates struggled to score high marks.

In (a) few understood *vientos flojos*.

In (b) many candidates mixed up *siete* and *diecisiete*.

In (c) most did very well as there were three acceptable answers.

La agencia especial europea

Most candidates managed high marks in this item.

3.3 Conclusions

- Answers in Listening Comprehension sometimes lacked the required detail. In other cases candidates put down the first thing they heard without listening to the end of the piece
- candidates need to carefully read the specific requirements of questions in the Reading Comprehension
- examiners noted that Written Production has improved this year and the number of candidates not answering here has declined significantly.

3.4 Recommendations

3.4.1 Recommendations to teachers and students

- speak as much Spanish as possible in the classroom
- ensure that students have regular practice in all aspects of languages skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing
- expose students to a wide range of reading materials which contain core vocabulary related to the themes of the syllabus
- emphasize the importance of grammatical accuracy and spelling
- ensure that students learn and practise numbers, days of the week, months of the year and seasons
- ensure that students get to grips with weather vocabulary
- continue to encourage students to become familiar with Spain and its culture
- students need to be constantly reminded to answer the Reading Comprehension questions in the language required, particularly Question 1.

4. Higher Level Written and Aural

4.1 Introduction

The Spanish Higher Level Leaving Certificate examination comprises four components:

Oral Production	100 marks
Reading Comprehension [incl. Literary Option]	170 marks
Written Production	50 marks
Listening Comprehension/Aural	80 marks

Numbers taking Spanish at Higher Level:

Year	Total	% of total Spanish candidature
2007	1533	57.6%
2008	1592	53.7%
2009	1858	56.7%
2010	2059	56.5%

Table 7: percentage of total Spanish candidature - Leaving Certificate 2007-2010

Written Paper

The Written Paper contains three sections:

Section A	Section B	Section C	Total
70 marks	100 marks	50 marks	220 marks
50+20	15+15+5+15+50	30+20	220

Table 8: Breakdown of marks - Higher Level Comprehension & Written Production

Section A: 70 Marks

Question 1, (50 marks). Candidates have a choice between the Prescribed Literature, *La aventura de Saíd*, and a Journalistic Text.

Question 2, (20 Marks). This comprises two short information retrieval comprehensions, with three questions on each passage in 2010.

Section B: 100 Marks

This tests both reading comprehension and written production. There are four main questions and these are structured to examine the candidate's ability to understand a lengthy authentic text in the target language.

A fifth question, (the Link Question), challenges the candidate to express their opinion in Spanish on a related topic. The importance of this fifth question is emphasised by the fact that it carries 50 marks, the equivalent of the four preceding questions combined. Students hoping for a high grade in Spanish must be able to tackle this question in a meaningful way as it is a key element of the examination. However, care must be taken when managing their examination, that candidates do not spend too much time on this component.

Section C: 50 Marks

In this section, which tests written production, candidates choose two of four different types of productive Spanish writing.

In Question 1, candidates choose between **Dialogue Construction** and **Letter Writing**.

In Question 2, there is a choice between a **Diary Entry** and a **Note**.

Note: In the productive writing sections of the paper, equal marks are allocated for content (including communication) and language.

Listening Comprehension/Aural Test

The Listening Comprehension had seven parts divided as follows:

1. *Un anuncio*
2. *Diálogo*
3. *Diálogo*
4. *Descriptivo*
5. *Descriptivo*
6. *El Tiempo*
7. *Una noticia*

4.2 Analysis of Candidate Performance

[See table in General Introduction to this report.]

4.2.1. Oral Production

A comprehensive account of the functioning of the oral component appears at the beginning of this report.

4.2.2. Written Paper-Section A and Section B

Section A

Question 1(a): Prescribed Literature: *La aventura de Saíd*: Josep Lorman

This novel was examined for the first time in 2006. It is short, topical, contemporary and well within the capabilities of Higher Level Leaving Certificate candidates. It offers teachers an opportunity to explore new possibilities with their students as it is a novel to which the students can readily relate.

It offers the candidates the opportunity of reading a modern Spanish novel and answering questions on the plot and characters. The numbers answering this question remain low, although there were some centres where this option was taken by as many as 12% of the candidates. The majority of candidates had clearly read the text and were able to demonstrate their knowledge of this in Q5. A minority simply attempted the literary option as a reading comprehension exercise. In some cases, they also attempted the Journalistic Text.

Some candidates found questions 1 and 2 the most difficult. However, most gained full marks in 3 and 4. Marks were usually lost by not giving enough examples. In Q5, those candidates who were not familiar with the entire novel lost marks here, whereas those who knew it well almost always scored full marks.

Question 1(b): Journalistic Text: *Los voluntarios que hacen felices a los ancianos*

This was generally answered well, except by less able candidates who had entered at the inappropriate level.

Q1. This is a summary question. This year candidates, including less able candidates, did better here than in previous years. Nevertheless, the text was sprinkled with material which challenged the strongest.

Part (a): most candidates understood the meaning and scored two marks.

Part (b): candidates lost marks through the omission of 'old' and/or 'alone'.

Part (c): all did well at this.

Part (d): some missed out by not giving both adjectives *seguro y cómodo*. Many lost marks because they did not understand *se encargan de que los ancianos se alimenten correctamente*.

Part (e): some considerable guessing was evident with this question. For example, when candidates were dealing with problems that often go unnoticed, they offered 'Alzheimer's'.

Q.2 Very well answered by the majority. However, some lost marks when they gave too many words to express the phrases given, especially with *para participar*.

Q3. Part (b) was a stumbling block for many. Somewhat surprisingly, the noun *tristeza* was not known by many, notwithstanding the fact that they must have come across *triste* on many occasions in class. Others simply left out *sobre todo*. Some jumped too quickly at the 'false friend' *familiares* without giving it due consideration.

In part (c) it was anticipated that some would have difficulty with *soledad* (often 'solidarity' was given) but quite a few candidates also struggled with *romper*. Candidates often lost marks because what they offered simply did not make sense.

Q4. Most opted for *es de suma importancia* and full marks were awarded even where there was no change of verb as in *es muy importante*. Some strong candidates offered *resulta muy importante*.

Unfortunately, there was some rubric infringement with this question. Despite the explicit *Explica (o expresa de otro modo) en ESPAÑOL* some candidates translated, or attempted to translate, one or other or both of the phrases. Candidates will be disadvantaged if unfamiliar with the layout of the examination paper and the requirements of each question.

Question 2: Short Comprehension Passages

Question 2 (a): *Los ruidos que más molestan a los españoles*

Well answered. Less able candidates missed *vecinos* and *sordos*. The idiomatic *se quedarán sordos* as 'they will end up' was lost on most, with some even going for the more literal 'they will stay'. Idiomatic language has always been highly prized and much rewarded in the Leaving Certificate so some extra attention to it, particularly by strong candidates, will bear fruit.

Question 2 (b): *Como elegir las gafas de sol*

This was well answered and most gained full marks. Some answers, however, were completely illogical: ‘You should wear brown-tinted sunglasses if you wear mini-skirts’ or ‘You should wear brown-tinted sunglasses if you are smaller than average height’. Candidates need to look at their answers to see if they actually mean something. Another example of an answer, not infrequently given, which would have benefited from further thought, was ‘free air sports’ from *deportes al aire libre*. Not all candidates knew *conducir* in (iii).

Section B

Long Comprehension Passage:

El blog de Juan Ramos:

¿Los coches electrónicos ya son toda una realidad? (Questions 1-4)

Only the strongest candidates scored full marks here. This question proved quite demanding for the least able candidates who might have been more suited to the Ordinary Level examination, something which is most evident in their inability to cope in a meaningful way with the Opinion Piece in Question 5.

Q. 1. Although answering has improved over the recent past, it is clear that some candidates do not know what is required of them here. Some lost marks through lack of accuracy by omitting or adding extra words.

In (a) marks were lost by the inclusion of *al* before *alzar la vista*.

In (b) the problem was the inclusion of *por* and in other cases by the omission of *está*.

Both (c) and (d) were well answered.

In (e) *recientemente* was common but incorrect.

Q.2. Marks were often lost here because candidates attempted to translate word for word and hence lost the meaning completely.

In (a) the greatest difficulty occurred with *se contemplaría* (the conditional form was not always recognised) and *la belleza*. Most knew *un cielo despejado*, possibly because of preparation for the weather question in the aural.

Part (b) caused problems for most candidates. Most did not recognise *Sueño* as a verb and were confused by the idiomatic need for the accompanying preposition *con*. More surprisingly, many candidates missed *carretera* although it might be expected at Higher Level that candidates would have encountered it more than once over the years. On the other hand, *neumáticos* eluded all but the strongest candidates.

In (c) the negative interrogative was missed by many. Again, surprisingly, *Ayuntamiento* was poorly handled and a significant number offered ‘contaminated cars’ for *vehículos altamente contaminantes*.

Q.3. It is clear from the answers given in this question that candidates need plenty of pre-examination practice in tasks where they are required to pick out exact phrases from a variety of texts.

Answers were better for (a), (b) and (c), although many gave *orgullosos* for (a).

In (d) many omitted *de* from *a partir de*.

In (e) *aportar* for *proponer* was common, instead of *plantear*. Many knew to get an infinitive but unfortunately picked the wrong one.

In (a) detail was lacking for full marks.

Q.4. In general, this question was handled well.

In (a) some neglected to give enough information and so lost marks.

Part (b) was the most demanding and many lost marks here due to insufficient detail.

Most understood that the price of an electric car was expensive now and would be cheaper in the future but neglected to provide the context for the variation in price.

In (c) the vast majority scored full marks.

4.2.3. Written Production Section B

The Link Question: (Section B, Question 5)

In this section, candidates are asked to express their personal opinions on a statement related to the comprehension passage. It is important to realise that candidates are not expected to refer to the comprehension text (nor should they quote from it) as the statements are meant to act as a starting point or stimulus for their own ideas. The candidate is assessed on the coherence, relevance and accuracy of their writing.

Candidates need to be taught to express their opinions in a coherent way, devoid of regurgitated sentences/paragraphs. Unfortunately, despite repeated exhortations that candidates give their own opinion on a topic, a considerable number of candidates do not seem to understand that **tu opinión**, (bold and underlined in the instructions), means just that. Many feel that they have to reproduce elaborate learnt-off passages of the opinions of others. In so doing, they

- frequently forget key words
- attempt to apply an argument on one topic to something quite different
- try to compose over-elaborate grammatical constructions
- forget that simple ideas, simply stated, are the best way to score marks.

In classroom preparation it cannot be overstated to candidates that they should think out/plan their answer by sketching the points they wish to make in a simple, logical framework and then attempt to put this down in their own words in Spanish. Candidates should aim for originality in this crucial part of the examination – as the Link Question is worth 50 marks, or 12½ % of the total marks in the Spanish Higher Level examination. It is also worth pointing out that entertainment is something that is often overlooked when dealing with this question.

This year the question was reasonably well answered as candidates understood the essay titles given. Indeed, both options this year, to an extent, pushed candidates to write on the chosen topic. Consequently, candidates who strayed from their chosen topic were quickly exposed - some wrote interesting essays on the wrong topics or insisted on reproducing learned-off essays on topics other than those asked. In still other cases, candidates used so many learned-off phrases that, unfortunately, their essays made very little sense.

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of two topics. In 2010 these were:

El invento más importante del siglo pasado and *El silencio no existe en el mundo moderno*.

El invento más importante del siglo pasado.

Those candidates who chose the first option tended to perform better than those who chose the second in so far as it was more difficult not to address the subject matter, even to a limited extent. In reality, the first option provided candidates of all abilities with the best opportunity to write from the point of view of personal experience. Although the less popular of the two choices, this was quite well answered as most candidates had material and vocabulary prepared about the internet and mobile phones and managed in many cases to express their opinions with some spontaneity. They often wrote accurately in simple, clear, Spanish, drawing from personal experience, while at the same time demonstrating their ability to manipulate lexis with accomplishment and competence. They were rewarded for thinking about the topic and planning their response.

One major drawback of these essays was that while a candidate may have prepared the positive and negative aspects of technology, they were then eager to present this kind of balanced view. However, the title demanded an essay that would extol the virtues of an invention and provide supporting argument as to why it was the best invention of the last century, not highlight its bad points, negative effects or limitations.

El silencio no existe en el mundo moderno.

Some candidates tended to drift off or even write off topic completely and were, accordingly, penalised. Despite stating early on that they were in agreement or not in agreement with the title, many candidates comprehensively failed to address the issue of whether silence exists or does not exist in today's world.

Those that scored well tended towards clear structure with one example of silence in today's world per paragraph. As ever, those candidates who personalised the topic provided the most engaging essays.

Some candidates went astray when unsuccessfully attempting to link the concepts of noise and silence to the topics of global warming, the economic crisis, world poverty, and drug and alcohol abuse.

4.2.4 Section C. Written Production

The Written Production Section requires candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of key grammar points and competence in their use as laid down in the syllabus. This is the most demanding part of the examination for candidates because it challenges them in a variety of exercises from opinions, conversation, letter writing, and note writing to diary entries. [Many of the points made here also apply to the Link Question.] The different exercises are a genuine test of their proficiency in Spanish and their ability to respond to the various stimuli. Examiners commented on the excellent grammar skills of many candidates. Some of these were obviously native speakers but, very encouragingly, an increasing percentage of these very strong candidates were Irish. A key point that candidates need to be fully aware of is the need to communicate rather than translate in Section C. Frequently, candidates approach the Dialogue Construction, in particular, as a translation exercise, not realising that they have considerable leeway in getting the points across. There are often a variety of ways of expressing an idea. However, without a sound foundation in the basics of Spanish grammar, candidates will struggle to negotiate their way through this section of the Higher Level examination. Many candidates who excel at comprehension, regrettably, score very low marks here because of their inability to manipulate the language.

Question 1(a): Dialogue Construction

Although the majority of candidates opted for this instead of the Letter/E-mail, they struggled to get 6/6 for any of the ‘turns’ due to poor grammatical accuracy and/or lack of key vocabulary and structures. While there were some more demanding elements in this question this year, there were also some very basic vocabulary and grammar points that Higher Level candidates should be expected to master. Those who were well prepared in this area by teachers who prioritised linguistic skills, were amply rewarded for their efforts as they attempted to come to grips with the dialogue.

Turn 1

There were frequent errors of gender and agreement here. *La mayoría* was known by only a few and *fábricas* also caused problems. Failure to express time was a source of surprise and the concept of pm was often omitted. *Noche* was given instead of *tarde* in some cases. Radically changing verbs such as *cerrar* and *volver* caused difficulties for many.

Turn 2

A significant number were not able to convey ‘It is very hot in Spain’. For expressing ‘People are very tired’ many put *gente* with the third person plural of the verb and *ser* was used instead of *estar*. Also some candidates had difficulty with *dormir* and vocabulary issues arose where candidates confused *después* with *antes*, (*de* was frequently omitted) and *cena* with *comida*.

Turn3

This was a difficult assignment for a number of candidates. *Pregunta* was a common mistranslation. Vocabulary problems were in abundance – ‘custom’, ‘nobody’ and ‘despite’ and the present continuous. There were also frequent misspellings of *cultura*, *cuestión* and *costumbre*. Many did not get *los turistas* demonstrating a poor grasp of the basic rules and exceptions of gendered nouns. Equally, the formation of the gerund for ‘is disappearing’ was not known to large numbers of candidates.

Turn 4

Many were unsure of ‘advantage’. The conjugation of *sentirse* was a chance for the excellent candidate to shine, whereas less able candidates showed deficiencies with respect to basic expressions such as ‘going for a walk’, ‘for a drink’ and ‘dining’ - ‘*comer*’ was common instead of *cenar* even when ‘dine’ is stated. Many used the present subjunctive form of *terminar* after *cuando* when this was clearly not a future action but rather an habitual one.

Turn 5

The idiomatic expression *Creo que no* is one that could easily be covered in a list of standard-issue opinion expressions geared towards the Link Topic or the Letter. *No lo creo/no pienso así* would also have sufficed here. The middle sentence was generally well handled. However, only the stronger candidates captured the required subjunctive in the final sentence.

Question 1(b): Letter Writing

The topic of *La corrida de toros* should have been welcomed by many of this year’s candidates given that this is the subject of one of the role-plays. However, their inability to expand on the points they made meant that many marks were lost. Expansion is vital on this question. For full marks, candidates were expected to make five points and then develop these. Marks were also lost where candidates used incorrect verbs or incorrect tenses. Similarly, marks were lost with simple mistakes such as lack of agreement of adjectives. Many candidates also did the Dialogue Construction and a clear majority of them fared better in the letter. Almost all candidates had been well taught how to set out and write formal correspondence and respected the formal form of address throughout, even using the possessive adjective *su* and the object pronoun *le* appropriately.

Question 2(a): Diary Entry

The looseness of the given points served candidates well. Getting the points across simply is the most effective way of scoring marks and some candidates did not help their cause by writing long sentences littered with simple grammatical errors. The mention of the recession favoured those who were on top of topical issues. Candidates well prepared for the oral examination did very well with the third point. Future or Conditional tenses in point four were usually dealt with effectively.

Common Errors

- Spelling of 'difficult'
- word for 'recession' and gender
- confusion in the use of *gastar* and *ganar*.

Question 2(b): Note

Although slightly more popular than the Diary Entry, it was dealt with less successfully.

Common Errors

- Some struggled with 'language school' and 'has organised'
- *teatro* sometimes spelt with a 'h'
- incorrect verb usage
- candidates did not know *cenar* and some that did, lost out by attempting overly complex expressions. Very few seemed to trust themselves enough to use the Present Tense for a not-too-distant future expression.
- some had difficulty with 'tomorrow morning'.

4.2.5 Listening Comprehension/Aural

Question 1. *Anuncio: Juegos olímpicos de 2016*

Candidates scored very well in this opening section, although the numbers getting full marks were low.

- (a) 'City' sometimes omitted as was '2016'.
- (b) (i) *Solidaridad* and *amistad* were not recognised.
(ii) Even fewer got 'Spanish Para Olympics Committee' with 'Olympic Committee' very common. The prefix *para* to the Olympics acted as a real differentiator of the 'A' candidate.
- (c) Usually correct as most established that the Olympics had never been held in South America. Some merely stated that they had been held already 30 times in Europe.
- (d) Few scored full marks. Most omitted *la delegación española confía en que*, stating only that the 2020 Olympics will be held in Madrid and so gained only 2 marks.

Question 2. *Diálogo: El uniforme escolar*

Parts (a) and (b) were well answered.

In (c) quite a few missed *la ropa de marca*. *Lavar* was often confused with *llevar* and many put down brother for *hermana*. The latter two mistakes illustrate the need to listen very carefully to detail and to double-check answers.

In (d) many just answered 'norms' for school rules.

Question 3. *Diálogo: Entrevista con el Sr. Zapatero, presidente del gobierno español*

This proved to be difficult for many and was the area where they lost most marks. All but the strongest candidates missed *sofocante* and *discurso*. *Profesor particular* also caused problems, often being interpreted as a 'particular professor/teacher'.

Surprisingly, many candidates did not know *baloncesto*. The most common incorrect answer was 'fishing'.

Question 4. Descriptivo: España manda ayuda humanitaria a Haití

In (a) only the strongest candidates managed to get ‘Vice President’.

In (b) 2 marks were lost here by not mentioning ‘emergencies’.

In (c) *doce* was frequently confused with *dos*.

Part (d) was well answered by all.

Question 5. Descriptivo: Una encuesta

Many candidates got full marks here, apart from (c) where many missed *respuestas* and *discapacidad física*. Part (d) was well covered.

Question 6. El tiempo

Marks achieved seemed to reflect the degree of practice candidates had received throughout the course, as there were wide variations from centre to centre. Substantial practice is required for this section and candidates need to be familiar with the specialist vocabulary relating to weather forecasts in Spanish. There was an improvement in marks compared with other years but extra marks could have been gleaned by better preparation and more attentive listening. This year the marks for this section amounted to 3% of the entire examination.

In (a) ‘in the mountains’ was not given by many but (b) was handled well.

In (c) few got all three elements in ‘strong, northerly winds’ – ‘winds in the north’ was a common answer. Few correctly identified *posibilidad de nieve*. Confusion with *niebla* led some to offer ‘fog’.

Part (d) was dealt with well, although some interpreted *treinta y cinco* as ‘36’.

Question 7. Una noticia: La agencia especial europea

This was very well answered by all. Only the stronger candidates got *nave especial* in (a) while in (b) the main difficulty was *título*.

4.3 Conclusions

- Both the aural and written sections of the examination were generally well answered
- there has been a noticeable and very welcome improvement in the written production areas of the examination
- teachers should assist candidates in selecting the level most appropriate for them, as a significant number are over-stretching by attempting the Higher Level examination
- candidates who gave ‘the meaning in context’ in the comprehension passages, rather than those who translated word for word, scored higher marks
- candidates who followed instructions and who demonstrated consistent capacities to communicate their understandings, thoughts and feelings presented successful work for assessment
- the standard of answering in some areas was disappointing, and examiners noted that candidates who received E, F and NG grades did not demonstrate the knowledge, detail and accuracy required to reach a D grade.

4.4 Recommendations

4.4.1 Recommendations to teachers

- Spanish should become, as far as possible, the language of communication in the Spanish class, from the time students begin their second level education
- remind candidates to answer all questions fully as many marks are needlessly lost because they do not give detailed answers
- do not assume that candidates know the gender of nouns. Many candidates are unaware of ideas such as ‘all *-dads* are feminine’ This covers many abstract concepts such as *probabilidad, soledad, amistad, solidaridad, posibilidad* etc. that frequently occur on examination papers. Likewise, the group of masculine words ending in *-ista*, such as *taxista, turista* etc.
- students should be taught to do a quick scan of their work purely for the purpose of correcting errors of gender and number agreement
- students would benefit from grounding in Spanish cultural and political knowledge to better equip them for references that arise in the examination
- more attention could usefully be paid to vocabulary associated with the weather. Repeated testing of key words is necessary, as is testing of words which candidates often confuse such as *nieve, niebla, nube* etc.
- more practice in basic sentence construction and verb conjugation is essential, especially when candidates are in borderline pass territory.

4.4.2 Recommendations to students

- Spend time on vocabulary associated with transport, occupations and ill-health/disability

- in the aural, the second and third playing of each part should be used by candidates, not to confirm what you have heard on the first playing, rather to question conclusions you may have jumped to
- watch Spanish films, television and listen to Spanish music
- if at all possible, think about doing an exchange in Spain or of visiting the country.
- students need a firm grasp of Spanish grammatical structure and extensive vocabulary to enable them to achieve well
- students also need to avoid simple spelling mistakes, incorrect adjectival endings, incorrect verb endings, and inappropriate use of the subjunctive mood.