

# Spanish (continuers)

2011 Assessment Report



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

# SPANISH (CONTINUERS)

## 2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

### OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

### GENERAL

Students were generally adequately prepared for both school and external assessment and demonstrated a satisfactory level of language skills and knowledge.

This year there was an increased emphasis on personal reflection in the In-depth Study. Overall, the examiners and moderators were satisfied with the quality and appropriateness of most students' responses.

Most successful students provided critical personal responses, as opposed to mere reproductions of the texts and sources consulted. Once again, students who did well took some time to examine the texts as a whole and produced well-organised responses that very often used students' own words.

As usual, students whose overall performance excelled also demonstrated accurate use of grammar. It is crucial for students to have a good command of some distinctive linguistic aspects in Spanish, for example:

- the different endings for verb tenses
- noun and adjective correspondence of gender and number
- proper use of pronouns
- sentence structure, especially in complex sentences.

In the written examination, it is expected that students write legibly and that they observe orthography and punctuation conventions.

It was noted that some incorrect or incomplete answers in the written examination were accompanied by correct notes in the spaces provided. Again, students who did well in the examination usually took time to make sure they understood the scope and purpose of the questions, and elaborated their answers accordingly.

Students are advised not to hurry when reading the examination questions, and to allow enough time to decide how to answer each question. Many questions demand some interpretation and elaboration and, accordingly, more considered responses attract higher marks.

In the examination, the examiners were pleased when students spoke their minds and gave a personal response (when appropriate) to the tasks and questions. The examination provided opportunities for students to go beyond a formulaic use of Spanish and to show a thorough understanding of the nature of each text or research topic.

Almost all students attempted all questions in the written examination, and there were many excellent responses. Students who performed well in the oral examination went beyond minimal responses, and took the initiative in parts of the conversation.

## **SCHOOL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 1: Folio**

Overall the design of tasks for moderation was adequate and consistent, although there was some variation in the level of difficulty of specific tasks.

#### **Interaction**

Students managed this section of the school assessment well, responding with a variety of tasks and an appropriate skill level. Teachers and students are reminded that, although notes may help in preparing for an interaction, reading from a prepared text is not appropriate. A scripted text does not allow students opportunity to interact spontaneously or demonstrate the ability to handle topic shifts and unpredictable elements during the interaction.

#### **Text Production**

Most samples included adequate tasks for the production of Spanish.

#### **Text Analysis**

The tasks designed for text analysis were adequate in general, with only minor differences in the nature and level of difficulty in some particular questions.

### **Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study**

#### **Oral Presentation in Spanish**

Students managed this section well with a range of tasks and an appropriate skill level demonstrated in their presentations. Teachers and students are reminded that it is not advisable for students to read from a scripted text, but to use cue cards instead.

#### **Written Response to the Topic in Spanish**

Most schools provided samples that included adequate tasks for the written response in Spanish. Only a small number of responses went over the prescribed text length. Responses to the topic varied greatly in nature and scope.

#### **Reflective Response in English**

This task proved to be the most challenging for students and samples varied greatly in nature and content. Most moderated samples demonstrated recounts rather than reflective writing, and there were some translations of the oral task. This is not consistent with the subject outline. The design of some tasks did not support reflective writing.

## **EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 3: Examination**

#### **Oral Examination**

The overall performance of most students was satisfactory. Most students managed well at taking turns, showing politeness, and using conventional greetings. Although it

was obvious to examiners that most students had been well advised as to how to prepare for the examination and most of them were adequately prepared, it was noted that some students could have benefited from a little more guidance from their teachers when choosing and tackling their topics for the in-depth study. In comparison, students tended to do better in the conversation section and the examiners' perception was that the general treatment of the discussion topics, although adequate, tended to be a little superficial and uninvolved.

It is important to remember that there are many different and distinctive Spanish accents and it is advisable for schools to try and expose the students to some of these different styles of oral speech. Students may be expected to cope with different accents in the oral examination.

### *Section 1: Conversation*

#### *Expression*

Generally students were able to maintain a conversation in Spanish with the examiners; the scope of their answers ranging from very basic and formulaic to excellent. Most students maintained natural conversations in Spanish even when the examiners moved away from rehearsed questions, and showed a good level of understanding in Spanish that required only minor rephrasing.

Students are reminded that in this section of the examination, the examiners take into account not only the conversation's accuracy but also how fluent and natural it is. Therefore, hesitations and requests for clarification are not necessarily considered to be evidence of lack of skill, but are seen as a normal part of natural conversation.

It was noted that a large proportion of students made a conscious effort to interact with the examiners, and posed their own questions to the examiners. The examiners appreciated the initiative this demonstrated, but teachers may wish to guide students on how and when it is appropriate to interact in this way. For example, some students inadvertently asked questions either too abruptly or at times when a question was irrelevant to the topic, as in the example below.

Examiner: *¿Cómo es tu familia?*  
Student: *Tengo un hermano y dos hermanas, ¿y tú?*

*(not appropriate)*

Examiner: *¿Cómo es tu familia?*  
Student: *Tengo un hermano y dos hermanas. Y usted, ¿cómo es su familia?*

*(appropriate)*

Students are reminded that any sample questions available on the SACE website ([www.sace.sa.edu.au](http://www.sace.sa.edu.au)) are not prescriptive and that they should not expect all of the same questions to feature in the conversation with examiners. Students may expect examiners to formulate questions differently or rephrase the student's own responses.

Most students demonstrated good clarity of expression and fluency in Spanish. It was only natural that some students tended to speak with an English accent, and this only occasionally presented a significant barrier to understanding. Students are reminded to speak as clearly as they can, in order to minimise the potential negative impact of a thick accent. Students should be particularly careful when pronouncing vowels and some distinctive sounds such as /t/, /r/, or /ñ/.

In most cases accuracy was adequate and in some cases it was outstanding, and there were only a few cases where lack of command over vocabulary and grammar structures posed a real problem for communication. When conversation takes place in a natural context, it is usual for speakers to hesitate, repeat, request clarification,

or even ask for some isolated words of vocabulary. Students should not think any worse of their own performances if they forget a particular word or make a mistake that they identify themselves or even correct on the spot. It is advisable not to stop the conversation but to look for alternative ways to express the concept they want to convey.

Some common mistakes include incorrect use of preterite and imperfect conjugation endings when talking about the past, and incorrect use of 'por'/'para', 'ser'/'estar', etc. Other errors were present but less common, for example, use of English word order, incorrect correspondence of gender/number between nouns and adjectives, and inappropriate verb regime ('él casó mi mamá', 'yo ducho y lavo los dientes'). Students are also encouraged to use structures and expressions like 'gustar', 'encantar', 'molestar', etc., which are favoured in Spanish over typical expressions in English such as passive voice. Some students tended to use the infinitive instead of pertinent conjugated verbs.

In general students performed well, using a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures, especially when talking about the present, the past, and the future. Some students found it challenging when trying to deal with hypothetical situations (which require use of conditional tenses) and express accurate opinions (which often require the use of subjunctive tenses).

### *Ideas*

Students did well when they had prepared for the examination and demonstrated their ability to go beyond minimal responses, making use of different linguistic resources (a variety of structures, tenses, expressions, etc.) and avoiding one-word responses such as 'I like it', 'It's good', or 'It's interesting'.

It is acknowledged that students tend to address their teachers and classmates in a casual way in the classroom and therefore prefer the forms with *tú* over *usted*. Some examiners also prefer the casual forms of address, which can create a relaxed atmosphere during the examination and is consistent with students' practice in the classroom. This poses a dilemma for some schools, since an examination is by nature a formal setting in which students usually meet the examiners for the first time and courtesy and politeness are expected from all participants. It is advisable to start any conversation in a polite, formal manner, and perhaps shift to a more casual register if appropriate, after being prompted to do so ('*tutéame*', '*puedes tutearme*', '*trátame de tú, por favor*') or after checking with the other speaker ('*¿puedo tutearla/o?*', '*¿está bien si uso tú?*', etc.).

### *Section 2: Discussion*

#### *Expression*

Many students performed very well in the discussion. As in previous years, the nature of the chosen topic, and the approach of each student to it, played a major part in each student's result for this section. Students are reminded to speak clearly and at an appropriate pace.

Students did well when they made good use of support materials and maintained eye contact with the examiners, when they avoided repeating or paraphrasing extended chunks of texts from their tasks, and when they developed their chosen topics using their own words. This approach enabled the discussion to be natural and fluent, at the same time ensuring that students were never out of their depth. Students who prepared well for this section not only provided detailed information but also were ready to give appropriate answers to examiners' questions on the topic, offering their own opinions on the matter.

Most students demonstrated an adequate capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately, and a large number showed a good level of proficiency. An Australian accent was present quite often, as may be expected, but a heavy accent affected the performance of relatively few students this year. It is important that students check the pronunciation of words that are unfamiliar, long, or difficult, during their research. For example, students should ensure that they can pronounce any difficult names, and it is especially important that the title of their topic is pronounced correctly.

As in the conversation section, students' overall command of grammar was adequate and, in many cases, outstanding. There were some expected minor problems, such as the use of 'ser' versus 'estar' and 'por' versus 'para', but these were not a major issue. Two common mistakes students made when talking about themselves were the overuse of gerund instead of infinitive and the incorrect use of pronouns when using verbs like 'gustar'. There were also frequent instances of 'viajar alrededor de Europa' (instead of 'viajar por Europa'). Students often had difficulty making appropriate use of 'mayor', 'menor', 'mejor', and 'peor'.

### *Ideas*

Some of the most popular topics this year included Hispanic Arts and Cultures, Hispanic History and Society in Hispanic countries.

Students are advised to prepare a thorough in-depth study and not to rely solely on their oral skills to do well in the discussion section of the examination. Teachers could also help their students to prepare for their discussions by reminding them that they may start with a brief introduction to the subject (for example, what is the topic, who is the person selected, how is the student's choice relevant, and what are the student's reasons for choosing the topic).

Some students only gave minimal responses without expressing their opinions, and most answered questions by repeating or adding new information rather than with a personal evaluation of the information presented. Some students did not produce any personal assessment about the topic researched or provide (when appropriate) a personal conclusion. Students are expected to analyse and summarise information for their in-depth study, rather than just reproduce it.

Students are also reminded to bring their in-depth study form to the examination, which will help the examiners to focus the discussion appropriately for each student.

### *Interpretation and Reflection*

Most students found it challenging to discuss their option of research with respect to interpretation and reflection. Aspects which were successfully discussed included how much they learnt during their research journey and how relevant their own topic of research might be in their future careers.

Interpretation questions for the discussion may focus on:

- how insightfully and clearly a student interprets and explains the content and context of the texts he/she used for the in-depth study
- how effectively a student gives evidence or example(s) from the texts to support his/her interpretation.

Reflection questions for the discussion may focus on:

- how cultures, values, beliefs, practices, and ideas are represented or expressed in the text(s)
- their own values, beliefs, practices, and ideas in relation to those in the texts studied

- their own learning.

Teachers may help students to prepare for this aspect of the discussion by practising structures in Spanish that are common in this kind of language (for example, 'es importante (que)', 'es deseable (que)', 'me interesa (que)', etc.).

## Written Examination

### *General Comments*

Overall students performed well in the written examination. As in past years, there were some outstanding performances and a few insufficient responses, but most students managed to successfully extract information, relate concepts, and summarise content in Spanish.

Although it was clear that most students were capable of understanding factual content in the texts, the depth and breadth of responses varied greatly. Many students found it difficult to grasp cultural aspects and the overall purpose and tone of some texts. Most students showed a partial understanding of such features, but only a few students managed to include them thoroughly in their responses. It is important for students to be familiar not only with essential features in different text types but also with all kinds of discourse markers in Spanish.

Although it was pleasing to note efforts by students to introduce more sophisticated structures in Spanish (for example, 'espero que' + subjunctive), many students tended to overlook the importance of punctuation and orthography when conveying subtle indications of tone in their responses. In some instances, the style used in responses did not quite reflect the required level of formality or casualness. In the same way, students sometimes did not detect indications of tone and intention in the listening texts.

Students did not always include all relevant evidence in their responses despite having a good understanding of the texts. Students should remember that, when a question asks for it, they should be able to justify their responses with evidence from the texts and that this is an essential part of many questions in order to obtain full marks.

### *Section 1: Listening and Responding*

There were five texts in Spanish, of various lengths and text types. At least four texts contained questions about the purpose or tone of the verbal exchanges included in them: a task that required skills in interpretation rather than just translation. As in past years, most students answered in general terms but only some showed that they understood all specific information. More importantly, the most successful responses addressed what each specific question required, and provided not only relevant supporting evidence from the texts but also some degree of elaboration and synthesis.

Some questions required more thorough elaboration from the students (i.e. of both content and language features in each text). Some responses did not gain any marks at all for questions in the listening section this year. Students must always remember that this section of the examination includes a variety of spoken texts, and teachers should expose students to a wide range of different oral language in Spanish during the teaching and learning program.

### *Question 1*

The first text was a radio announcement advertising a small car. Most students correctly answered the parts of the question that concerned where to place the

furniture, but only a small number identified the text appropriately, and most said that the text was a conversation between two people placing furniture inside a house.

#### *Question 2*

Text 2 described the discovery of an Aztec statue in the luggage of a group of students returning to Australia from Mexico. The text included information about the sculpture and the outcomes of the find. Most students managed both questions about this text well, with responses varying in range of details provided.

#### *Question 3*

Text 3 was a radio interview with a representative of an organisation that entertains children who are victims of war or natural disasters. The interview dealt with the appropriateness of this initiative and explored its potential benefits for children. Most students managed to identify the interviewee as a 'clown-doctor' and a large number of responses showed a sound understanding of the rationale of the initiative, although only a third of the cohort supported their responses with evidence from the text.

#### *Question 4*

Text 4 consisted of a conversation, with Yolanda interviewing for a part-time position as a receptionist at an aquatic centre. The interview covered a wide range of aspects of the position and its duties. Most students demonstrated a good understanding of the job although some responses identified the position being discussed as lifesaver rather than receptionist. Students handled the second part of the question very satisfactorily overall, providing many reasons why the student would or would not get the job. However, in the same way as in question 3, some responses did not provide adequate references to the text when justifying their response, offering instead a limited personal interpretation of the content and context of the interview.

#### *Question 5*

This text was a radio announcement for a competition, the prize being a free trip to Peru to attend the ceremony of Inti Raymi (celebration of Inca New Year) in June. Most students correctly identified the sponsor of the competition and the occasion for the promotion, but only a third of the cohort showed a thorough understanding of the nature of the ceremony, which was described throughout the text.

#### *Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A*

This section consisted of two related texts: a short article about the growth of a website dedicated to Spanish language and culture, and a formal speech about the Spanish language. The first text dealt with the changes in nature, purpose, and size of the website. The second offered a personal reflection by a native speaker on the nature and evolution of the Spanish language.

#### *Question 6*

Most students adequately addressed both parts of question 6, with supporting evidence in part (b) of the question varying greatly across responses. Successful responses included details not only about the continuous growth of the site, but also about its changing nature (from learning tool to intercultural forum and research pool).

### Question 7

All three questions for Text 7 proved challenging for most students, no doubt because they required interpretative responses. As expected, most students were able to extract enough information from the text to answer the questions successfully, but the degree of detail provided to support their responses varied considerably.

Successful responses to question 7 (a) included some indication of the personal identity and cultural aspects of language.

Question 7 (b) required some interpretation and comparison of different sections of the text. In particular, most successful responses managed to link the richness of the Spanish language with the convoluted historical processes that have shaped Latin America.

Question 7 (c) required the analysis and contrast of both Text 6 and Text 7, and most students managed to show a sound understanding of the nature of the Spanish language as described in the texts. Adequate responses included some reference to the constant evolution and expansion of Spanish, but more successful responses also included references to '*mestizaje*' and the both intercultural and international nature of the forums on the Plaza website.

Students are advised to allow time to clearly identify the context and intention of each text before attempting to answer the questions in this section. It is also essential that students read each question carefully and decide on a strategy for building their response. Most responses involve some degree of comparison, connection, interpretation, and summary, either of different parts of the text or across the whole text. Many questions also require students to respond in their own words and to refer to the original text in supporting their response, rather than extracting a few disconnected words from the original text.

### Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

#### Question 8

Text 8 was an informal email from a friend in Argentina sharing his/her hurdles, anxieties, and hopes about a fast-approaching graduation ceremony and party. The writer raised questions about differences between Argentinian and Australian customs and expectations around this celebration. In responding, students were expected to offer details about their plans for a similar event in Australia and to offer their impressions on the matter.

The text prompted many heartfelt responses, which varied greatly in nature, style, and complexity. There was a large number of appropriate responses. A small number of responses contained fewer words than were required for the task.

Almost all students showed a very good understanding of the conventions of the text type requested for the task (i.e. informal register, including a heading and farewell). However, the pertinence and soundness of their responses varied extensively, ranging from some highly articulate and organised responses to some that offered only basic information, details, and personal preferences. Most successful responses managed to engage the reader in a personal reflection on the nature of this type of ceremony in Australia, with references to the other country. A significant number of students misinterpreted the line '*en la cena, nuestros padres se sentarán a la misma mesa*' as a reference to ordinary family dinner, rather than a formal dinner to celebrate the graduation ceremony.

Successful responses demonstrated a good command of syntax, verb conjugation, pronouns, and prepositions. Common mistakes included

- inappropriate use of *'por'* and *'para'*; *'ser'* instead of *'estar'*
- improper choice of adjective or adverb, i.e. *'bueno'* instead of *'bien'*
- incorrect choice of prepositions (*'pero'* versus *'sino'*)
- use of indicative mood when subjunctive was required.

In some responses there were sufficient numbers of such errors to hinder the natural flow of the text, or affect the meaning of the message. Students are reminded that to produce successful, well-articulated texts in Spanish for this section and other parts of the examination, they must demonstrate a sound command of verb conjugation.

Markers also noted a substantial number of responses that contained many punctuation and orthographic errors (i.e. misuse of *b* and *v*, absence of *h*, lack of graphic accents, etc.), although syntax was mostly satisfactory. Students who have some access to Spanish-speaking communities should take special care when transcribing language they have acquired orally (i.e. *'deberdá'* for *'de verdad'*, or *'mi iho'* for *'me dijo'*).

### *Section 3: Writing in Spanish*

Question 9 was the most popular (59%), followed by question 10 (almost 26%). Only 15% of students chose question 11.

Question 9 was a diary entry narrating a recent difference of opinion with a friend, and required some level of reflection from students. Many students managed to write rich and very interesting narratives for this question, of a sufficient length.

Question 10 required students to write an article, containing persuasive language, about the need to lead a healthy lifestyle. It was noted that responses tended to repeat rather than elaborate on ideas.

Question 11 gave the students the opportunity to write formally to a celebrity asking them to visit the student's home area. Almost all responses appropriately included an introduction and a farewell.

This year's cohort was well able to produce soundly written texts and this was reflected in the many high marks for this section.

Overall most students produce well-structured texts in this section, with relevant and coherent ideas, although responses sometimes lacked a little detail and sophistication.

As in the previous section of the examination, many responses demonstrated a good command of syntax and a sound knowledge of the conventions for each text type. Independently of their level of skill, some students were rather inconsistent in register or tone, and some speeches displayed casual language that was somehow too relaxed for a formal setting.

Mistakes in grammar included the following:

- Absence of appropriate accents and other punctuation signs: *'Espero que tu estas bien.'*
- Use of present continuous after preposition: *'Gracias por leyendo esta carta.'*
- Improper choice of adjective versus adverb: *'Mi vida es mal al momento.'*
- Inappropriate verb structure: *'Regresan sus casas.'*
- Incorrect construction of 'back-to-front' verbs: *'Los jóvenes les gustan ir a barbacoas.'*

- Lack of correspondence for gender or number: *'Tus pasiones es muy importante.'*
- Wrong verb ending or conjugation: *'Mi profesora siempre dije que...'*
- Improper use of Spanglish: *'Todos somos individuales [individuos, únicos] / Hay mucha gente estereotípica [estereotipada, llena de tópicos].'*
- Improper choice of past tense in narrations: *'Recientemente leía una carta.'*
- Improper choice of preposition: *'Soy trabajadora con mis estudios / Todos de los países del mundo.'*
- Absence of definitive article: *'Jóvenes que compran mucho son muy aburridos.'*
- Incorrect choice of indicative or subjunctive: *'Aprender otra lengua es esencial para que los jóvenes pueden comunicar.'*

Students are reminded to allow time to check their punctuation, spelling, and syntax after writing their responses. It is also very important for students to have a basic, solid command on the use of the subjunctive, since this conjugation is constantly needed in Spanish for the expression of ideas and opinions.

### **OPERATIONAL ADVICE**

Materials for moderation were generally packaged and organised adequately. Schools are reminded to include approved learning and assessment plans, plus a 'Variations – Moderation Materials' form (if applicable), as well as all of the assessment tasks for the students in the moderation sample.

Schools are reminded to arrange students' samples by assessment type. It is helpful to the moderators to have supporting transcripts or discs with any audio-visual material students were asked to analyse, when appropriate and available.

Chief Assessor  
Spanish Continuers