

AM SYLLABUS (2025)

SPANISH

AM 31

SYLLABUS

Spanish AM 31 Syllabus	(Available in September) Paper 1 (2 hrs) + Paper II (2 hrs) + Paper III (3 hrs) + Paper IV (Aural-oral: 1hr)
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1. AIMS

The AM Spanish syllabus aims to expand on the candidates' knowledge and skills obtained at SEC and/or IM level by:

- developing listening and reading skills to understand authentic texts from different sources of certain complexity and in a variety of registers;
- developing speaking and writing skills to communicate confidently, clearly, fluently and accurately in a variety of situations and on different topics;
- acquiring further socio-linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge and skills to communicate appropriately and effectively given a particular situation;
- developing a sound base of skills, language abilities and positive attitudes required for further study at degree level, for improving career prospects and/or for leisure intentions;
- developing deeper insights into the culture and civilization of Spain and of Spanish-American countries, through the study of socio-cultural aspects and literary texts;
- developing adequate skills for critical analysis and appreciation of literary and socio-cultural texts;
- developing positive attitudes towards language learning, towards the speakers of different countries and towards other cultures and societies.

2. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The examination is devised to assess candidates' linguistic competence in the four language skills as well as their socio-cultural knowledge and their literary appreciation skills. In the exam, candidates will be expected to:

- understand and respond to written and oral authentic texts taken from a variety of current, popular sources such as magazines, newspapers, reports, books, television and radio programs, etc.;
- manipulate the language accurately and fluently in spoken and written forms, by showing a richness in vocabulary and idiomatic expressions and through good use of grammar and syntax;
- provide sufficient and appropriate information on set topics;
- present well-structured, logical and coherent arguments, opinions and ideas;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of aspects of Spanish and Spanish-American cultures;
- analyze and critically appreciate the literary texts set.

3. SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT & EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination will consist of three written papers and an aural-oral test, carrying a total of 180 marks. The total duration of the written parts of the examination is 7 hours. The listening session takes 30 minutes whilst the oral session takes 15 minutes per candidate. All instructions are given in Spanish and candidates are to answer in Spanish. No type of book, text book or dictionary is allowed during any part of the examination.

PAPER	TIME ALLOTTED PER PAPER	MAIN SKILL/S TESTED	TASK/S SET	MARKS ALLOTTED PER TASK	% WEIGHTING PER SKILL
1	2 hrs	Writing	A) Long essay task	20	16.7%
			B) Short writing task	10	
2	2 hrs	Language use	A) Language-use exercises	30	16.7%
		Reading	B) Reading comprehension	30	16.7%
3	3 hrs	Literary appreciation	A.1) Long essay on set literary text 1	10	11.1%
			A.2) Long essay on set literary text 2	10	
		Intercultural knowledge	B) Essay on set cultural topic	10	5.6%
4	1 hr	Listening	A.1) Listening comprehension (Text 1)	15	16.7%
			A.2) Listening comprehension (Text 2)	15	
		Speaking	B.1) Picture interpretation	20	16.7%
			B.2) Topic conversation	10	
TOTAL:				180	100%

Paper I (2 hours, 30 marks)

A) Essay writing exercise (20 marks)

A choice of 5 titles will be given, offering different long-writing styles: descriptive, narrative and argumentative forms. All set topics will be of general interest, relating to experiences and events normally encountered in everyday life. Candidates are expected to write about 250-300 words on ONE topic of their choice, using a formal, academic register. Candidates are expected to demonstrate their ability to describe, narrate, explain, present facts, argue, justify and evaluate, according to the topic chosen by them, in a logical and coherent manner, making use of correct grammar and syntax. They should also make use of a wide range of vocabulary and include idiomatic expressions. Of the 20 marks allotted, 12 are for the quality of the language and 8 for the content.

B) Short writing exercise (10 marks)

A choice of 2 titles will be given, offering two different short-writing styles, such as: formal and/or informal letter, e-mail, advert, postcard, etc. Candidates are expected to write 100 -150 words on ONE topic of their choice. Candidates are expected to demonstrate their ability to express themselves communicatively in a more common, 'everyday' situation, using varied lexical terms, using correct grammatical and syntactical structures and adequately employing either formal or colloquial, informal styles as required by the topic chosen. Of the 10 marks allotted, 6 are for the quality of the language and 4 for the content.

Paper II (2 hours, 60 marks)

A) Language-use exercises (30 marks)

This task is intended to test a wide range of specific language elements: application of grammar rules, syntactical structures, a range of vocabulary, idioms and idiomatic expressions. A number of exercises will be given to test the candidate's ability to manipulate language structures in a grammatically and pragmatically correct way, given particular communicative contexts. The exercises in this task may include: transformation, substitution, sentence completion, recognition of functions, gap filling, editing, etc. This task carries a total of 30 marks and each question's weighting may vary depending on the element/s it is intended to test.

B) Reading comprehension (30 marks)

A contemporary text of 550 words, taken from an authentic source, will be given as a reading task. Should the text be taken from a Spanish-American source, the language variety used should not present too much lexical variance from the standard Castilian Spanish so as not to hinder the candidate's comprehension. A variety of questions will be set to test the candidate's ability to get the gist of the text as well as to focus on particular facts and details of the same text. Candidates are expected to answer in full, to paraphrase, to reword their answers and to avoid copying chunks (a group of 4 consecutive words or more) directly from the text so as to demonstrate what they have really understood from the text. This task carries a total of 30 marks and each question's weighting may vary depending on the element/s it is intended to test.

Paper III (3 hours, 30 marks)

A) Literature appreciation (20 marks)

The following 5 literary texts are set:

1. Federico García Lorca, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*.
2. Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, *Rimas*.
3. Isabel Allende, *La casa de los espíritus*.
4. Miguel de Unamuno, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*.
5. Camilo José Cela, *La Familia de Pascual Duarte*.

(Note: Only original, non-abridged and non- adapted versions are acceptable at this level.)

Two literary essay questions will be given for each set text. Candidates are expected to choose TWO set texts and write a literary essay of 300-350 words in Spanish on each set text. Candidates are expected to write a literary interpretation and appreciation, reflecting detailed knowledge of the text, revealing awareness of how the author conveys the message of the work, providing quotations to sustain their arguments and showing background knowledge of the author and of the literary period. Candidates are expected to write in a logical and coherent manner, making good use of vocabulary,

grammar and syntax. The Literature section has a total of 20 marks, 10 marks for each literary essay. Of these 10 marks, 6 are allotted for content and 4 for language use.

B) Spanish and Spanish-American Intercultural Knowledge (10 marks)

Intercultural awareness and knowledge should be developed in both formal culture and deep culture. Formal culture, also referred to as “culture with a capital C”, includes the humanistic manifestations and contributions of a culture: art; music; literature; architecture; technology; politics, whilst deep culture, or “culture with a small c” and “culture with a k”, focuses on the behavioural patterns or lifestyles of the people: when and what they eat; how they make a living; the attitudes they express towards friends and members of their families; which expressions they use to show approval or disapproval, etc. It is also recommended to practise language through culture and vice versa, thus developing language skills, particularly those of reading and listening hand in hand with explicit and implicit intercultural awareness. For these reasons, the following cultural topics are set:

- i. Información general, geográfica, lingüística y estadística sobre España e Hispanoamérica.
- ii. La transición democrática de España: de la dictadura de Franco a la constitución presente.
- iii. El proceso de independización de los países hispanoamericanos: de las grandes civilizaciones precolombinas a la independencia de cada país.
- iv. La España política-administrativa.
- v. Los problemas actuales y los papeles en las sociedades hispanohablantes de los jóvenes, los hombres, las mujeres, los ancianos y la familia.
- vi. Las mentalidades en las sociedades hispanohablantes: la conciencia ecológica, la orientación sexual, las creencias religiosas y el multiculturalismo.
- vii. Algunas fiestas populares en España y en Hispanoamérica: las fallas, la Feria de Abril, las fiestas de moros y cristianos, los Sanfermines, la Semana Santa, el Rocío, el Día de la Hispanidad/ el día de las razas, el día de los muertos, el Inti Raymi (Perú), el 5 de Mayo (México), los carnavales y las fiestas navideñas.
- viii. La gastronomía española e hispanoamericana.
- ix. Las bellas artes de España e Hispanoamérica.
- x. El mundo del espectáculo y del ocio en España y en Hispanoamérica.

The following bibliography is suggested as reference for the afore-mentioned topics:

- *Esp@ña, Manual de civilización* de Sebastián Quesada Marco, Editorial Edelsa Español Lengua Extranjera (ISBN: 978-84-7711-619-6)

(Note: The afore-mentioned text should be referred to as a starting point to trigger further discussions in class and/or further individual research about certain issues arising in the said text. The candidate may make reference to other material s/he might find relevant to understand better the cultural aspects listed above.)

Four general cultural questions will be given on different set topics. Candidates are expected to choose ONE question and write an essay of 300-350 words in Spanish on the chosen topic, showing sound intercultural knowledge and good use of vocabulary, grammar and syntax. This task is allotted 10 marks, 6 for content and 4 for language use.

Paper IV: Aural-oral sessions (1hr, 60 marks)

A) Listening session: Listening comprehensions (30 marks, 45min)

Two contemporary texts of about 200 words each, taken from authentic sources, will be given as a listening task. Should the text be taken from a Spanish-American source, the language variety used should not present too much lexical variance from the standard Castilian Spanish so as not to hinder the candidate’s comprehension. The questioning exercises will be set to test the candidate’s ability to get the gist of the text as well as to focus on particular facts and details of the same text. Items for the first text (Text 1) would be of two types: fill-in the blank with one word/phrase format and true/false format which includes the correction of the false statements indicated by the candidate. In the second text (Text 2), questions should be of two types: complete the sentence format and the open-ended question-answer format.

Text 1 will be read out in this procedure:

- i. The candidate will be allowed three minutes to read the questions prior to the first reading;
- ii. The text will then be read aloud once at a normal pace and with as close a pronunciation as possible to that of a native speaker, taking approximately not more than three minutes;
- iii. The candidate will be allowed five minutes to re-read the questions and answer;
- iv. Subsequently the examiner will read again the text at the same pace and fluency for not more than three minutes;
- v. The candidate will be allowed five minutes to check and finalize his/her answers.

Text 2 will be read out in this procedure:

- i. The candidate will be allowed three minutes to read the questions prior to the first reading;
- ii. The text will then be read aloud once at a normal pace and with as close a pronunciation as possible to that of a native speaker, taking approximately not more than three minutes;
- iii. The candidate will be allowed seven minutes to re-read the questions and answer;
- iv. Subsequently the examiner will read again the text at the same pace and fluency for not more than three minutes;
- v. The candidate will be allowed seven minutes to check and finalize his/her answers.

The whole listening section is to be carried out in approximately 45 minutes. Each text will carry a total of 15 marks so that the whole listening task carries a total of 30 marks and each question's weighting may vary from 1 to 4 marks depending on the element/s it is intended to test.

B) Oral session (30 marks, 15 min)

The Oral examination is made up of two components: Picture interpretation and Free topic conversation. Each candidate will be examined individually for 15 minutes. This examination session will be preceded by a 15 minute preparation time and will be carried out as follows:

B.1) Picture Interpretation (20 marks, 10 min)

The candidate is given two pictures to choose one as a visual stimulus to trigger a conversation between him/her and the examiner. The candidate will have about 10 minutes to prepare him/herself for this task. Once in the examination room, the conversation should comprise: a description of the picture, personal interpretation of the elements observed and a short open discussion budding from this interpretation. All personal interpretations will be accepted as long as they are relevant since the aim of this task is purely to evaluate the candidate's speaking skills. The examiner may encourage the candidate to contribute further to the conversation and may prompt the candidate when s/he has some difficulty in continuing. In such instances, the examiner would ask open-ended questions (such as *'tell me more about...'*, *'what do you think of...?'*, *'why...?'*, *'how...?'*), rather than use closed-ended questions which may be answered by a simple 'yes/no'. Spontaneous corrections are accepted. The total of 20 marks will be distributed as follows: 10 marks for content, 5 marks for fluency, pronunciation and intonation, and 5 marks for language use.

B.2) Free topic conversation (10 marks, 5 min)

The candidate is asked to draw one topic from a set of 5 by lot as a subject of conversation between him/her and the examiner. All set topics will be of general interest, relating to experiences and events normally encountered in everyday life. The candidate will have about 5 minutes to prepare him/herself for this task. Once in the examination room, the candidate should do a short verbal presentation on the subject chosen. The candidate should be able to present relevant facts, express opinions and hypotheses and answer any consequent questions which the examiner might ask about the topic. The examiner may encourage the candidate to contribute further to the conversation and may prompt the candidate when s/he has some difficulty in continuing. In such instances, the examiner would ask open-ended questions (such as *'tell me more about...'*, *'what do you think of...?'*, *'why...?'*, *'how...?'*), rather than use closed-ended questions which may be answered by a simple 'yes/no'. This task is not meant to test the candidate's general knowledge on the topic chosen but his/her ability to carry on a fluent, meaningful conversation in good, correct Spanish. Spontaneous corrections are accepted. The total of 10 marks will be distributed as follows: 5 marks for content, 3 marks for fluency, pronunciation and intonation, and 2 marks for language use.

4. SUBJECT CONTENT

Candidates are expected to have a thorough knowledge of modern idiomatic Castilian Spanish and to express themselves fluently in speaking and writing. Candidates are also expected to be aware of general variations in the language as spoken in other Spanish-speaking countries. Knowledge of the following language items is essential:

1. nouns (common vs proper, concrete vs abstract, individual vs collective, countable vs non-countable, singular vs plural, homonyms, anthroponyms, toponyms);
2. adjectives (calificatives, relationals, relative possessive [*cuyo/a/s*], comparatives, superlatives, adverbialization, sentence positioning including pre-positioning);
3. determiners and pronouns (values, meanings and syntactical distribution of: definite and indefinite articles, demonstratives, possessives, quantifiers, personal pronouns, relatives, interrogatives, exclamatives);
4. adverbs and adverbial locutions (ending in *-mente*, predicative of: time, place, modality, interrogative, conjunctive)
5. verb conjugation and use (indicative, gerund, participle, all forms of indicative and subjunctive, conditional, imperative, simple and compound forms, passive voice);
6. conjunctions, connectors and prepositions;
7. number and gender agreement;
8. simple, compound and complex syntactical structures (main clauses, coordinate and subordinate clauses, word order, direct and indirect speech);
9. orthography, punctuation, accentuation, abbreviations and acronyms;
10. pronunciation, intonation, accentuation, rhythm;
11. speech functions and pragmatic strategies and tactics;
12. common idioms and idiomatic expressions.

All textual material used in the examination will be drawn from the topic areas (*nociones*) listed below, with possible references to Malta, Spain and/or any other Spanish-speaking country:

- The individual identity
- The physical and emotional dimensions of the individual
- Human relationships: family, friends, neighbours, generation gaps, adolescence...
- Patterns of daily life and home environment
- Urban and rural life
- Pollution, conservation and the natural environment
- Diet and nutrition
- Education
- Work, employment and unemployment
- Leisure time, recreational activities, celebrations and festivities
- Information and the mass media
- Housing and accommodation, domestic objects and activities
- Social services and establishments
- Health, hygiene and fitness
- Travel, tourism, lodging and means of transport
- Shopping, economy and industry
- Scientific advances and technological innovation
- Government, politics, law and order, war and peace
- Cultural life, heritage and the arts
- Religion, philosophy and beliefs
- Geography, nature, environment and the developing world
- Contemporary aspects of Spain and Spanish-speaking countries

For further details and examples of all the afore-mentioned items regarding the subject content, the following bibliography is suggested as reference:

- *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes, Niveles de referencia para el español de VV.AA.*, Instituto Cervantes, Biblioteca Nueva, 2006 (ISBN: 84-9742-615-0) which can also be found available online on:

http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/plan_curricular/default.htm