In 2015 Spain promulgated a law allowing the descendants of the Sephardim who were expelled more than 500 years ago from Iberia (which in Hebrew, is called Sepharad), to apply for citizenship. Applications had to be submitted by the end of September 2019 (with a further year to do the DELE A2 and CCSE exams – click here for more detail). It is subject to a basic Spanish language test (the DELE A2), as well as a civics-style test of knowledge of Spanish culture and the constitution (the CCSE). The language test is prescribed for Sephardic applicants under the age of 70, from countries where Spanish is not the official language. So, what does the DELE A2 exam entail?
In this blog-post we will explain the nature of the DELE exam, what level of ability i.t.o. comprehension and expression is required in A2, the scoring criteria that the examiners apply, what grammar and functional language use elements are prescribed in the A2 curriculum, where and when to take the DELE A2 exam, its format, and how best to prepare for success.

**NATURE OF THE DELE SYSTEM:** The first thing to know about the DELE (which stands for “Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera – diploma of Spanish as foreign language”) is that it is NOT a typical school or college language exam focused on theoretical knowledge, such as of the rules of grammar. The DELE is a very practical test of your ability to **apply** your knowledge of the Spanish language in a real-world context – i.e., of the **ability to actually communicate** in Spanish in everyday circumstances. It tests four communicative competencies, with equal weight: listening comprehension,
reading comprehension, expression in writing and oral expression.

The DELE is managed by the Instituto Cervantes, the Spanish state-funded cultural institute that is similar to the British Council, the Alliance française of France, and the Goethe-Institut of Germany. The DELE diplomas are issued in the name of the minister of education, culture and sport of Spain. They conform to the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (the CEF). There are three main levels – Level A for beginners, Level B for intermediate, and Level C for advanced. Each main level is divided in two (i.e., A1 & A2, B1 & B2, and C1 & C2), making for six levels in all. Level A2 is thus the second beginner level, also called “waystage”.

**DEFINITION OF THE STANDARD** – This is the official CEF definition of the level of communicative competency that DELE A2 represents: “Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.”

To clarify this standard further, the CEF provides a self-assessment tool for each of the communicative competencies at Level A2. It is self-explanatory and reads as follows:

**Listening comprehension** – I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and
announcements.

**Reading comprehension** – I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.

**Spoken interaction and production** – I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can’t usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself. I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.

**Writing** – I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.

The **SCORING CRITERIA** used in the DELE exam further illustrate the practical nature of the testing, which aims to directly test ability to actually communicate – thus indirectly what you know about theory. There are four equally-weighted criteria used in assessing the written and oral expression tests (the comprehension tests are of the multiple-choice type). The four criteria are:

1. **Coherence**, meaning how well the candidate can convey meaning, whether orally or in writing.
2. **Fluency** of speech, which assesses ability to keep a conversation flowing by means of, for example, the appropriate use of link words to string together phrases, thereby avoiding fragmented, staccato utterances (in the case of the written expression tasks, fluency is substituted with testing conformity to the
genre, i.e., the appropriate format, level of formality, etc.)

3. **Correctness**, which assesses how well words are pronounced (or spelled, in the case of writing) and how correct the candidate expresses him/herself in terms of grammar – regarding grammar correctness, it is important to note that every small error isn’t penalised, unless it detracts from correct understanding of the meaning the candidate wishes to communicate, or is so repetitive that it shows a lack of basic knowledge.

4. **Linguistic scope**, which considers the adequacy of the candidate’s **vocabulary** for the tasks required at Level A2.

From the above, you will note that grammar correctness forms a very limited part of the DELE exam -which means that exam preparation should not be primarily focused on it, school style; practicing actually speaking, writing and comprehending would be much more essential, though grammar should not be neglected either.

There’s an excellent e-book of DELE A2 model exams that one can buy for €9-90 and download, via [this LINK](#).
Talking about **SPANISH GRAMMAR**, the DELE A2 curriculum requires that the candidate should have knowledge of the following Spanish verbal moods and tenses:

Of the four moods in Spanish, only the **Indicative** (used to objectively describe concrete actions) and the **Imperative** (used to give orders). The Subjunctive and the Conditional moods are thus not required at this level.

Of the **tenses** of the **Indicative Mood**, knowledge of the following is required:

- Present;
- Preterit (i.e., simple past tense – example: I ate);
- Imperfect Preterit (i.e., continuous past tense – example: I have been eating);
- Perfect (i.e., compound past tense – example: I have eaten).

**FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE USES TO BE MASTERCED** – being a very practical exam focused on everyday functional language use, the DELE A2 curriculum emphasizes and details the communicative tasks that a candidate must be able to perform. These can be summarized as follows:

1. **GIVE AND ASK FOR INFORMATION:**

   - **Identification** – identify yourself (I am), things (this/that/my...), others & other things (by name and he/she/the), my preferences & those of others.
   - **Ask for information about** – persons, things, class or type, places, nationality, activity, quantity, time, finality (by when must...?), reason / cause, method / manner (how do I...), alternatives (tea or coffee?), expressions of curiosity (why did you go there?).
   - **Give information about** – yourself (personal data), things, places, time, frequency, finality, reason/cause,
correcting wrong information, responding in the affirmative / negative i.r.o. information postulated.

- **Ask for confirmation** – you are Julian?, is it true that…?, isn’t the number…?
- **Confirm / deny information postulated** – yes, I’m Julian, no it isn’t true that…, yes, I’m British.

3. EXPRESS OPINIONS, ATTITUDES & KNOWLEDGE
   - Ask and give an opinion
   - Ask and give a value statement (are you well? / I am well)
   - Express approval or disapproval
   - Position self for or against something
   - Ask if in agreement / invite agreement / express agreement or disagreement
   - Express scepticism / present counter-argument
   - Express certainty and evidence / express doubt about certainty and evidence
   - Express possibility
   - Express presence or absence of obligation and necessity
   - Express or ask about knowledge / state you have no knowledge about something
   - Ask about or express ability to do something
   - Express or ask about recalling something / state that you don’t recall

3. EXPRESS TASTES, DESIRES & SENTIMENTS
   - Express or ask about interest in / taste for something or express aversion
   - Ask about or express preferences
   - Ask about or express desires
   - Ask about or express plans and intentions
   - Ask how someone is doing / feeling
   - Express sentiments – un/happiness, satisfaction, sorrow, pleasure, boredom, anger and indignation, anxiety, fear, preoccupation, nervousness, relief,
surprise, admiration and pride, affection, physical sensations (hunger, thirst, pain, feeling unwell)

4. INFLUENCE YOUR INTERLOCUTOR
   • Give an order or instruction
   • Ask a favour
   • Ask for something (object)
   • Ask for help
   • Respond to an order, request or wish
   • Ask for, give or deny permission
   • Propose or suggest some course of action
   • Offer or invite
   • Ask for confirmation of an offer, accept an offer, reject an offer or proposal
   • Advise or warn
   • Offer to do something

5. RELATE SOCIALLY
   • Greet and respond to a greeting
   • Approach / engage someone
   • Present yourself to someone
   • Respond to someone presenting him/herself to you
   • Welcome someone and respond to a welcome
   • Excuse yourself and respond to someone asking to be excused
   • Thank someone and respond to thanks
   • Offer sympathy (lo siento)
   • Propose a toast
   • Congratulate
   • Wish someone well / respond to congratulations and well-wishing
   • Take your leave from company
6. STRUCTURE A CONVERSATION

- Establish communication or react to communication being established
- Greet and respond to a greeting
- Ask for someone or respond to such query
- Ask for an address / phone number or respond when asked
- Ask to leave a message
- Ask interlocutor to commence conversation (as on phone) or react to its initiation
- Introduce a theme / subject or react to it being introduced
- Indicate interest in a subject
- Organize the subject matter
- Interrupt someone politely
- Ask someone politely to keep quiet
- Conclude a subject
• Politely propose closure of a conversation

(Keep in mind that, although these generic headings of communicative functions may appear overwhelmingly broad at first glance, the DELE A2 curriculum inventory provides much more limiting detail about exactly what is expected at A2 level under each heading – your tutor will work through this detail with you, to ensure that you can perform each function as required).

THE DELE EXAM – WHERE & WHEN TAKEN: The DELE exam is taken at accredited exam centres around the world, on fixed dates – usually five or six times per year, in February, April, May, July, October and end November.
An important point to note, is that **not all accredited DELE exam centres offer the DELE A2 at every scheduled sitting**. You thus have to make doubly sure with the exam centre of your preference, that they are actually going to be able to offer, **guaranteed**, the DELE A2 exam on your chosen date (the oral exam requires two certified DELE A2 examiners to be present; if the centre doesn’t have sufficient local examiners, the
Instituto Cervantes has to fly out examiners, which they only do if a certain quota is met at the particular centre).

As you can see, candidates typically must register more than a month in advance, and the results are only available three months after the exam date. For candidates wanting to apply for the “right of return” accorded to the Sefardíes, time is therefore running out, given the end September 2018 cut-off date for applications to be submitted. It should also be noted that the new online version of the DELE exam, the SIELE (which was introduced only after the 2015 law was passed) evidently isn’t mentioned in the law as an acceptable alternative to the DELE for purposes of the “right to return” – even though it is also administered by the Instituto Cervantes and has the exact same standards and curriculum. (We here at DELEhelp are trying to get the SIELE formally included, because it can be taken all year-round with 48-hour registration and its results are available within just three weeks, but time may be too short to really accomplish anything with the bureaucracy).

So, if you want to do the DELE A2 for “right of return” purposes, you have to start preparing NOW.

**FORMAT OF THE DELE A2 EXAM** – the exam consists of four tests (“pruebas”) corresponding to the four communicative competencies. The three written parts are taken sequentially on the exam date; the oral test is individually scheduled, for either the day before, or on the day of the written exam (after completion of those tests). The DELE A2 exam format was streamlined and improved at the end of 2019, taking effect in February 2020 (the descriptions below have been updated as per the new format, about which you can read more detail in this DELEhelp blog post – click on the IMAGE to go to the post):
The first written test is **Reading Comprehension**, lasting 60 minutes and comprising 4 tasks with a total of 25 items. The **Listening Comprehension** test lasts 40 minutes, also with four tasks and 25 items. These comprehension tests are taken in the form of multiple choice papers marked by computer.

The **Expression in Writing** test lasts 45 minutes and consists of two tasks, written long-hand on paper. These are marked by qualified examiners in Spain.

The **Oral Expression** test is preceded by 12 minutes preparation time, and then lasts a further 12 minutes. It involves four tasks. The first is a prepared presentation on a given theme, the second consists of describing what is seen on a photograph, and the third is a dialogue with the interviewer in a simulated situation derived from the photograph in the second task. The oral is examined on the spot at the exam
centre, by two certified A2-level DELE oral examiners. One is
the interviewer, who does a holistic assessment. The other
does a more detailed analytical assessment and usually sits
behind the candidate.

Via this link you can listen to a recording of the oral test
of a candidate who failed:
https://examenes.cervantes.es/sites/default/files/09_a2_101120
_eio_muestra_banda1.mp3

This is a link to a recording of a candidate who passed the
DELE A2 oral test:
https://examenes.cervantes.es/sites/default/files/09_A1_110520
_EIO_muestra_banda2.mp3

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE DELE EXAM:

Students do not all have the same aptitude for learning
languages, have different learning preferences, and don’t have
the same amount of time available. It is therefore essential
that a proper diagnostic be done of each individual, and a
personalized study plan be developed based on that.

Most of the potential applicants for the “right of return”
will find themselves in work and family situations that won’t
easily permit dropping everything and going off to a residential language school for an extended period. This is where modern technology comes in – with Skype, students can learn from the comfort and convenience of their own homes, one-on-one with a dedicated tutor, with a flexible schedule fitted around their realities. There’s no cost of flying off to attend school, nor accommodation costs and no opportunity cost in the form of lost income either. Furthermore, with Skype it is possible to search for tutors based in countries with a low cost of living, such as Central America, and avoid paying high tuition fees in Euros.

One thing that is definitely NOT ideal, is ending up in group classes (typically 6 or 8 students in European schools) where everything is reduced to the rhythm of the lowest common denominator.

The foregoing doesn’t mean that immersion in the last weeks before the exam date isn’t valuable. Such intensive exposure at a suitable residential school, with homestay with a Hispanic family, can be beneficial as final polishing – if
done 1-on-1, with someone who knows what your Skype preparation consisted of and can integrate seamlessly with that. But it will cost a lot. On the other hand, it is quite possible to have the same intensity via Skype, doing an “immersion” the last few weeks with your known tutor, by blocking out sufficient time on your calendar.

If you have an exam centre near your home, and you therefore aren’t in any case obliged to fly off to an exam centre abroad, then Skype immersion makes more sense than residential immersion. The latter is normally over-cooked, because too many hours are fitted into to few days (since one cannot be away from home/work too long). Skype immersion ensures big savings in cost and time. It is clearly not an optimal learning situation to sit through seven or eight hours of classes a day at a residential school (as one would do, to justify the cost of the trip and accommodation). With Skype immersion, proper rest breaks can be planned in-between, without leaving a sense of a wasted investment in travel and opportunity costs.

La Antigua Guatemala (where we are based) is recognized as one of the world’s leading centres for the teaching of Spanish as foreign language. Guatemala offers unbeatably low prices in a beautiful historic setting. We have a large DELE exam centre where you can be guaranteed that the A2 will be offered on each scheduled exam date. So, if you do need to travel (because of not having an exam centre near your home) you may want to consider our partner residential facility here for such immersion, where you can be sure that your immersion will integrate seamlessly with your DELEhelp Skype tuition, and you will probably have your DELEhelp Skype tutor as your immersion tutor. Their website’s url is: www.probigua.com

Click on the image below to be taken to a short video recommending PROBIGUA:
LINKS TO OTHER BLOGPOSTS AND FREE RESOURCES – for more information about how to prepare for different elements of the DELE exams, you can have a look at some of the other posts on this blog. The blogpost here-below provides links to our top 16 posts, covering topics such as how to ace the oral exam, top tips for the written exam, how to navigate the multiple-choice format of the comprehension tests, top tested answers to DELE exam FAQ’s, and the like (click on this cover image to go to our omnibus post, and then click on the covers of the individual posts you want to read):

OFFER: FREE EXAM PREP HANDBOOK & FREE EXPLORATORY SKYPE SESSION

At DELEhelp we offer our 96-page e-book “DELE Exam Orientation
& Acing Tips” free and without obligation – just ask for it via our contact information form (click on the image below, to be taken to the form). We also offer a free, one-hour exploratory Skype session, which you can request via the same contact information form.

It would be an honour and a privilege for us to help more descendants of the Sefardíes to successfully claim their right of return to the land of their ancestors.

Saludos cordiales

Willem Steenkamp
Personalized, 1-on-1 tutoring via Skype for DELE / SIELE & OPI, US$14 p.h.

See more on our website: https://edele.org
(click on this image)

Sephardic Jews Spain right of return DELE A2 language test