



National Qualifications 2007

Senior Verifier Report

Subject: Spanish

Assessment Panel: Modern Languages

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification which has taken place within National Qualifications in this subject.

NATIONAL UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS VERIFIED

SPEAKING: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION AT INTERMEDIATE 1, 2 & HIGHER LEVELS

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

Verifiers found clear evidence of the following:

- In the vast majority of examples across all three levels, candidates were very well prepared in all parts of the test.
- Skilled interlocutors who were supportive, encouraging and sympathetic and brought out the best in candidates.
- At all three levels there were very few unsatisfactory or poor performances.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Areas of good practice:

Verifiers commented positively on the strength of presentations at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels. The vast majority sampled were well structured and contained a wide range of vocabulary, grammar and structures. As a result, most candidates were performing above the Satisfactory mark in this area.

Regarding the discussion at these two levels, it was felt that in many centres there was natural progression through the prescribed themes and topics. This intended to bring out the best in candidates and resulted in spontaneous, natural discussions. Pleasingly, there was evidence this year in the sample selected of fewer “mini presentations” in the discussion part of the exam.

It was agreed that most centres were accurate in the marks awarded to candidates. To echo last year’s advice, it is still beneficial for centres to use the exemplar material provided by SQA and in particular in centres where there are less experienced interlocutors at these levels.

Finally, this year there were more Verification Sample forms completed accurately and the conduct of the vast majority of tests was in accordance with SQA guidelines. It is worthwhile to point out that raw marks (i.e. those out of 30 at Intermediate 1 and 2 levels, and out of 25 at Higher level) should be entered in column A of the Verification sample form and not percentages.

Areas for further development:

Intermediate 1

Again this year centres tended to award the Very Good or Good categories for more basic assessments. At this level candidates should be able to demonstrate the appropriate range of grammar and vocabulary required (see grammar grid in appendix of Arrangements document).

It should also be noted that centres should submit the instrument of assessment if selected for verification.

Intermediate 2

It was noted by verification that in some centres where most candidates were being assessed at Higher level, those at Intermediate 2 level were at times assessed more severely. Centres should therefore ensure that candidates at Intermediate 2 level are not marked as Higher candidates. The exemplar materials from SQA would be of use in this case.

Most of the comments for Higher also apply to this level.

Higher

Despite finding clear evidence of strong presentations, verifiers felt that there were too many examples of presentations where the topic being presented was not evident. Centres should be reminded that the topic must come from one of the prescribed themes (see Arrangements document) and that a candidate talking about his/her life in general is not suitable for this part of the test. It should also be noted that there should be no interruptions from the interlocutor during the presentation, and that there should be a clear beginning and end. In the discussion part of the test, there should not merely be a re-hash of the presentation material. In some instances, presentations were too long (some over 4 minutes) and the follow-up discussion too short at only 2/3 minutes in length. Again, centres should ensure that all those involved in preparing candidates for this part of the exam are familiar with the Arrangements document.

Although there were many good examples of discussions where candidates were supported by patient, sympathetic interlocutors, there was still evidence from some centres where interlocutors did not bring out the best in the candidates. Long periods of hesitancy and/or silence can be avoided by skilled interlocutors using prompting or rewording of questions. Progression through topics is the aim of this part of the test; despite this, however, it was found in some cases that the discussion did not flow naturally and some candidates were not given the opportunity to develop ideas. Candidates should be encouraged, where the situation arises, to develop an idea or topic to ensure a more natural type of discussion.

A general comment to be made which covers all three levels is the issue of mispronunciation. There are some cases where candidates are unaware of the basics of Spanish phonetics (such as the “j” and “g” sounds) and some serious other-language interference. This is an important issue across all three levels.

Finally, it is felt that many of the comments from last year’s Senior Verifier’s report have been addressed and the conduct of this part of the exam has improved overall.