Qualification Verification Summary Report
NQ Verification 2018–19

01 ▶ Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Spanish
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2019

National Courses verified:

C869 75 National 5 Performance–talking (IACCA)*
C869 76 Higher   Performance–talking (IACCA)

* Internally-assessed component of course assessment

02 ▶ Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres verified in round 2 used the SQA coursework assessment task for the performance–talking as set out in the Higher and National 5 Modern Languages course specification documents.

Spanish verifiers noted that the quality of the performances sampled at both levels was generally good and that candidates were well prepared for the task.

Assessors had guided candidates well in the selection of their topics and, in many performances, these allowed candidates to employ a range of structures, vocabulary and tenses appropriate to each level and to the chosen topics.

Verifiers noted that centres had encouraged candidates to personalise their performances. A good range of topics was covered among the centres verified.

Verifiers also noted that candidates covered at least two contexts with ease at both National 5 and Higher. Where assessors asked a good range of open-ended questions, this gave candidates the opportunity to express a range of ideas and opinions and use detailed or detailed and complex language according to the level of the performance (National 5 or Higher).

Higher — discussion

This session, centres assessed candidates using the revised format of the performance–talking at Higher. This involves a discussion only, as opposed to a presentation followed by a conversation as per the previous assessment conditions for the performance–talking at Higher.

In general terms, candidates coped well with the task. Some candidates found difficulty in sustaining the quality of the performance as the discussion progressed. Centres should use the initial 1 or 2 minutes to focus on general questions in order to allow the candidate to settle in to the task.

Centres should use open-ended questions as these are more effective in eliciting detailed and complex language from candidates. The over-use of closed questions in a few instances did not help candidates expand on their answers.

National 5 — presentation

Many presentations were well-organised with candidates using relevant content, ideas and opinions. Centres should remind candidates to avoid listing (nouns in particular).

National 5 — conversation

Assessors were generally very supportive and prompted their candidates at appropriate points during the conversation. However, assessors should only prompt candidates when necessary, possibly rephrasing questions, and should allow time for the candidates to think about a suitable response. Some performances were characterised by good use of interjections and connectives.

National 5 conversation and Higher discussion

Assessors should avoid the over-use of closed questions. Assessors should give candidates appropriate thinking time in conversations so that they can formulate their answers and, in some instances, correct themselves.

Candidates may use extended answers in places, but assessors should dissuade candidates from responding to questions with 'mini-presentations'. Longer answers can appear to be rehearsed; therefore, assessors should encourage candidates to use a variety of shorter and longer responses in conversations at National 5 and Higher.

Assessors should try not to monopolise the conversation (National 5) or discussion (Higher). Centres should also provide candidates with a variety of questions and ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to cope with an element of unpredictability at both levels.

Where candidates select similar topics for the conversation at National 5, or the discussion at Higher, centres should consider how to phrase questions in a variety of ways, or how to focus on different aspects of a same topic area with candidates.

Personalisation and choice

Centres should encourage candidates to prepare independently for the performance–talking assessment. This means candidates can select their preferred vocabulary and language structures for the chosen contexts and it allows them to personalise their performance.

Duration of the performance–talking

In relation to the guidelines for approach, centres should refer to the recommended duration of the talking performance as laid out in 'assessment conditions' for 'Performance–talking'. These can be found in the National 5 and Higher Modern Languages course specification documents.

Some performances were too long and this was not necessarily to the benefit of candidates. Other performances were significantly shorter than the recommended duration and, at times, this meant that candidates did not always have the opportunity to demonstrate detailed language (National 5) or detailed and complex language (Higher) as well as a wider variety of language structures.

Assessment judgements

The majority of centres applied the marking instructions in line with national standards at National 5 and Higher. Centres that were 'not accepted' were either too severe, too lenient or inconsistent in their application of the marking instructions.

Centres should make use of the Understanding Standards materials for National 5 and Higher Spanish talking performances (IACCAs) published on the SQA secure website.

Centres should also remember that talking performances are often uneven and some variation in the quality of performance is to be expected, even within each pegged mark in the marking instructions. All aspects of the performance–talking should be considered when marking the task: content, accuracy, language resource and interaction (conversation only at National 5). Performances should be marked positively and holistically and do not have to be perfect to be awarded the highest marks.

Assessors should refer to the general marking principles along with the detailed marking instructions (pegged marks) within the relevant documents highlighted above.

When explaining assessment judgements in the candidate assessment record (or similar document), it is very useful if centres refer closely to the descriptors in the detailed marking instructions. This generally makes it easier for verifiers to understand how decisions regarding marks awarded were reached.

Section 3: General comments

The degree of accuracy is something verifiers continue to comment on. Grammatical errors can detract from the overall impression in performances and this should be an area for continued focus in learning and teaching.

Organisation of sample materials for external (SQA) verification

The majority of centres produced a verification sample which was well organised. Centres should list candidates alphabetically for each level (National 5 and Higher) on the Verification Sample Form.

Recordings

Centres must ensure all audio or video recordings are audible and playable on a variety of devices (and not solely the type of device used to make the recording).

Marks

Centres should note that they are required to provide a breakdown of marks (for the presentation, conversation and sustaining the conversation at National 5) and total mark for each candidate at National 5 and Higher. These marks should be clearly noted on the candidate assessment record (or equivalent document) for each candidate. For each candidate in the sample, centres must also insert the total mark for the performance–talking on the 'Mark (centre use)' column on the Verification Sample Form.

A minority of centres had noted pegged marks on the candidate assessment record which are not available (ie pegged marks which do not exist in the detailed marking instructions). Centres should adhere closely to the detailed marking instructions available in the documents referenced above.

Internal verification

The majority of centres provided evidence of internal verification. It is always useful in the external verification process when centres include detail (eg on the candidate assessment record or similar document) of the reasons why a candidate was awarded one pegged mark rather than another for the talking performance.

Where there is documented discussion between assessors and internal verifiers this can be very helpful. However, where this involves changes to marks awarded, centres must ensure it is clear to external verifiers which final marks and totals were agreed. In some samples verified by the Spanish team it was not clear what was the centre's final decision regarding a mark (or marks).

Centres should only annotate the Verification Sample Form with the agreed total mark for each candidate in the sample after the internal verification process applied in the centre is complete. The total mark for the performance–talking in the 'Mark (centre use)' column of the Verification Sample Form should reflect the total noted on the candidate assessment record (or similar document).

Preparation of the sample for external (SQA) verification

In view of the above comments, centres are kindly requested to thoroughly check their sample submission and all related paperwork.

SQA generic documentation relating to external verification may refer to internally-assessed components of course assessment at Advanced Higher; however, this does not apply in Modern Languages. The performance–talking at Advanced Higher is externally assessed by a visiting assessor.

For preparation of future samples for external (SQA) verification, centres should refer to the key publications for verification of the performance–talking:

♦ [Generating the evidence sample](#)
♦ [Evidence for external verification of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher internally-assessed components of course assessments](#)

Both these publications (and other documents for the verification of units) are available on the [SQA National Qualifications external verification web page](#).