



Course Report 2014

Subject	Spanish
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question Paper

This was the first year of presentations for National 5 Spanish and it was very pleasing to note that candidates, on the whole, performed well across all three sections of the question papers in Reading, Writing and Listening. Markers reported that there were very few poor performances. In particular, Reading and Writing were well done and many candidates' performances in Writing were very high.

There were over 2900 candidates from a total of 149 centres presented. Candidates and their teachers/lecturers are to be congratulated on their excellent preparation for the examination. Most candidates were presented at the correct level.

As indicated in the Course Assessment Specification for National 5 Modern Languages, the content of the Course Assessment covered all four contexts (society, learning, employability and culture) and was of the appropriate level of challenge. Markers noted that the papers and Marking Instructions were very fair.

In **Reading** and **Listening**, overall, the sections were balanced in terms of high, low and average demand questions.

In **Reading**, candidates read three texts of approximately 150–200 words in Spanish and answered in English the questions that followed each text. The three texts in this year's paper covered the contexts of learning (text 1: Erasmus grants), culture (text 2: Mexican film actor) and employability (text 3: employability skills in Spanish employees). The overall purpose question this year, the question which assesses the candidates' ability to understand the overall purpose of a text, was for text 3.

In **Writing**, candidates read a job advert in Spanish and completed a task with six bullet points, of which the first four bullet points were: name, age and where you live; school/college/education experience until now; skills/interests which make you right for the job, and related work experience. The last two bullet points (the two unpredictable bullet points) were: your plans for accommodation in Madrid, and why you want to work in Madrid. Candidates wrote an e-mail applying for the job in Spanish by addressing these six bullet points.

In the **Listening** Question Paper, candidates listened to Item 1, a short monologue of approximately 1 minute, in which Javier spoke about whether or not he had a healthy lifestyle. In Item 2 candidates listened to Sara who spoke about her lifestyle and her use of technology. After each Item, candidates answered questions in English. At the end of Item 1, the monologue, candidates answered the overall purpose question.

Component 2: Performance: Talking

Centres used the 'National 5 Modern Languages Performance: talking Assessment task' document appropriately to assess all candidates.

The Marking Instructions for the presentation and conversation, including the natural element, were used appropriately and many centres provided commentaries on candidate performances with specific reference to aspects of the pegged mark commentaries provided in the Marking Instructions, eg comment on fluency, accuracy, range of vocabulary etc. Many centres used the Modern Languages Performance 'Assessment Record' document to record commentaries about the sections of each of their candidates' performances.

In terms of the recommended duration of the talking performance, centres are advised to refer to the 'Modern Languages Performance: Talking General Assessment Information' document.

All centres provided audio recordings of the performances as appropriate to the task.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1

On the whole, the performance of candidates in this year's question papers has been very good, with many candidates accessing full marks for many of the individual questions in each section of the assessment.

Candidates performed particularly well in **Reading** and **Writing**. In **Reading**, candidates clearly engaged with the topics in the texts, read the questions carefully and understood what was required. Many provided sufficient detail in their answers, and good English expression was also apparent.

In **Writing**, markers noted the high number of candidates who addressed all the bullet points fully. There were many examples of detailed writing with a good range of expression and accuracy throughout. There were also many examples where the content of the writing was clearly relevant and consistent with a job application e-mail. In particular, markers commented on the number of candidates who were able to address the last two unpredictable bullet points with a good level of accuracy.

Many candidates accessed high marks in **Listening**, particularly in the conversation part (Item 2). Candidates on the whole seemed to recognise a broad range of vocabulary from the context of society in which the Listening Items were set.

For some candidates, there were some challenges across each section of the assessment:

- ◆ In **Reading**, mistranslation, poor dictionary use and poor English expression were the three main factors that contributed to candidates losing marks. Insufficient detail in a response was another factor that led to some candidates not receiving marks in their answers.
- ◆ In **Writing**, a very small number of candidates omitted one or more bullet points. Also, some candidates lost control of accuracy in the two unpredictable bullet points.

- ◆ Finally, in **Listening**, some candidates did not recognise basic vocabulary or vocabulary to do with the areas of health and technology. Lack of detail where verbs were required also let down some candidates.

Component 2

Generally speaking, candidates performed well in the talking performance.

The majority of externally verified candidate performances scored 'Satisfactory' and above for the presentation and conversation sections. The natural element was also mainly awarded 'Satisfactory' and above.

Presentation section

In most cases, candidates performed more confidently in this section of the talking performance, with many well-structured and fluent performances. Generally, this section of the talking performance provided an opportunity for candidates to show control of the language.

Conversation section

In general, candidates performed well in the conversation section and were able to sustain an interaction based on the same or related topic in relation to the presentation context. Where interlocutors used a wide variety of questions in the conversation section this often helped candidates to avoid recycling the same language and structures from their presentations into their conversations.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1

Candidates performed well across the three skills (reading, writing and listening), and it was evident that centres had prepared their candidates well.

Reading

In Reading, the majority of candidates coped well with the three texts and the questions, and the reading section provided a good opportunity for candidates to show progression from the internal Unit requirements to the external Course assessment.

There was a very high level of response in the Reading section of the question paper, with very little evidence of candidates running out of time or being unable to complete the paper on time. There were very few questions in the reading paper with no response.

The questions following each of the three texts were clearly worded and accessible to candidates, making it straightforward for the vast majority of candidates to locate the answers in the text from the wording of the questions. Candidates have been well prepared in providing the correct amount of information for an answer. For example, in questions that required two details, the vast majority of candidates were able to respond with two pieces of information.

The overall purpose question (text 3, question (f)), was very well done, with the vast majority of candidates responding correctly.

Writing

It was clear that centres had prepared their candidates well for Writing, and that candidates understood and engaged with the task. The context of the job advert was very clear and accessible to candidates. The unpredictable points selected provided a very good counterbalance to the fixed bullet points and led to candidates having a very fair challenge in this section of the question paper. Given that this is the first year of this task, candidates had clearly been very well prepared for the set bullet points and on the whole performed very well. There were many examples of the task that had been written fully, using a range of vocabulary and structures appropriate to National 5 level. In addition, there were very few examples of job e-mails that included irrelevant material or that did not address one or more of the bullet points.

Many candidates were able to maintain a good level of accuracy throughout the writing, such as maintaining consistency in the use of adjectives and adjectival agreement, using verbs accurately in terms of person and tense and employing conjunctions and other structures appropriately and correctly.

On the whole, candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points well to convey the information required. Many candidates addressed the bullet point about school/college/education experience by giving opinions about subjects being studied/previously studied, or by offering other relevant information. This is good practice and should be encouraged. The bullet point addressing skills/interests was particularly well done — many candidates wrote about their range of skills for work using a variety of structures. It should be noted that candidates can address just one of these (ie skills or interests) to cover this bullet point.

Markers noted that many candidates were able to address the last two unpredictable bullet points, either by direct reference to each point (for example, in bullet point 5 – plans for accommodation in Madrid — *Quiero quedarme en un piso en Madrid*) or by inference (*mis abuelos viven en España*).

Listening

It is pleasing to note that candidates clearly engaged with the content of both Item 1 (the monologue) and Item 2 (the dialogue). This was demonstrated to a great extent by the relative lack of no responses, with candidates tending to offer at least an 'educated guess'.

The topics of Health and Technology were generally well dealt with so it is encouraging that centres are clearly exposing candidates to appropriate materials for National 5. Each Item covered a good range of topics from the National 5 Spanish Course and used a range of vocabulary. Many candidates seemed comfortable and at ease with the topics of lifestyle and media/technology. In general, candidates coped well with basic vocabulary, for example, *plaza mayor* and *centro comercial*.

The wording of the questions in both Items was straightforward and helpful to candidates. There were a range of questions that required knowledge of more basic vocabulary, for example question 2(a) 'What does Sara do to stay in shape? State any one thing', *no*

mucho; and questions that required detail, such as question 2(b) 'What does she use her computer for? State any two things', *buscar información para mis deberes*.

Candidates tended to do better with those questions requiring mostly a single noun response, for example 1(a) 'What type of exercise does Javier do? State **two** things', or 2(g) 'Where does Sara go when she goes out? State **three** places'.

Component 2

Presentation section

In this section, most externally-verified performances highlighted that candidates could perform successfully and were well-prepared for the assessment task. Most candidates relayed ideas and opinions about their chosen topic using detailed language and structures as appropriate to National 5. Generally, candidates demonstrated a range of vocabulary and structures that were relevant to the chosen content focus, and handled grammar accurately. This is as may be expected in the most predictable section of the talking performance. Where candidates could show a variety of tenses, this was often attributable to the context or topic, some of which provide greater scope for candidates to achieve this.

Conversation section

Most candidates coped well with this section and were able to respond to questions with responses that were relevant and demonstrated understanding of the questions put to them by the interlocutor at normal speed. Some candidates were able to take some control of the direction of the conversation by asking questions of the interlocutor, and this worked well in some instances and provided evidence of a natural conversation.

Where candidates performed well, they were able to demonstrate use of detailed language and structures, most of which were likely to have been recycled from learning and teaching activities relating to the chosen topic. Usually, candidates who performed well in their responses demonstrated little hesitation, having given thought to their opinion, or to the possible content of their answers ahead of the assessment event. A good range of open-ended questions from the interlocutor provided candidates with more opportunity to expand on answers and use detailed language.

Natural element

In the main, among the candidates who performed well in this sub-section were those who were able to respond well to questions, ask questions of the interlocutor, and use idiomatic or conversational phrases that would be used naturally in an interaction. In general, candidates coped better with the conversation section where they could reasonably cope with unexpected questions, and could either say they had not understood or could ask for repetition and rephrasing of questions using the language.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1

Reading

Most candidates coped well with this section, but there were some questions which some candidates found more challenging.

Text 1 question (d)(i): Some candidates had difficulty translating and understanding *volví a casa sabiendo hablar inglés* where the use of the word *casa* and the present participle of *saber* confused some candidates. Also, the verb *relacionarme* proved to be difficult for some to translate.

Text 2 question (a): Some candidates did not receive the full mark available because they had omitted the translation of *actuando* to describe what he did in the theatre. 'In the theatre', without mention of performing or acting, was insufficient to gain the mark. There were also mistranslations of *telenovela* with some candidates simply translating it as television.

Text 3 question (e): Some candidates did not read the Spanish accurately and mistranslated *dificultades* as 'problems', so instead of answering with 'solve unexpected difficulties' they wrote instead 'solve problems'.

As well as these specific questions, across the section there were examples where poor English expression let down some candidates. There were also instances when misuse of the dictionary or guessing led to mistranslations of words. For example, in Text 1 question (d)(ii), some candidates translated *manera* as 'manner'. Likewise, there was mistranslation of *asistió* in Text 2 question, where some translated it as 'assisted'. And in Text 3 question (a) some candidates translated *publicidad* as 'publishing' and *negocios* as 'negotiations'. Not enough details in answers also let down some candidates, as happened in text 2 question (d), where some candidates wrote that 'life was difficult' but did not translate who for ie *para los granjeros*.

Writing

Candidates on the whole performed well in this skill, and it was evident that the vast majority had been well prepared for the task.

However, for some candidates, their ability to use Spanish deteriorated significantly with the two unpredictable bullet points, although in many others they were addressed adequately, or well. The lack of accuracy and grammatical control made it difficult for markers to understand these last two bullet points. Candidates who had problems with one or both tended to misuse the dictionary and show mother-tongue interference. Some candidates also had problems applying basic grammar rules in conjugating verbs found in the dictionary. There were examples of literal translations of 'stay' such as using the noun *estancia* in place of a verb to address bullet point five.

Listening

Generally speaking, although for many candidates this question paper was accessible, there were candidates who found some questions demanding:

- ◆ Question 1(a): Some candidates confused *gimnasio* with gymnastics.
- ◆ Question 1(e): Candidates had to translate the verbs accurately in this question, and so 'ate sweets' was not sufficient for *comprábamos caramelos*. Also in this question, some did not understand that *pasteles* were cakes.
- ◆ Question 2(e): To answer this question correctly, the sense of distance was required with the idea of friends, and so candidates needed to translate *lejos* to receive the mark for this point.

Although many candidates were familiar with more basic vocabulary, there was still a large number of candidates who did not understand words such as in Item 1 *bebidas gaseosas*, and *verduras*; and in Item 2 *polideportivo* and *lejos*.

Across both Items, some candidates found the topics of health and technology challenging, and did not seem to be familiar with the vocabulary. Some candidates did not understand vocabulary such as *descargar música* (Item 1) and *perfil* (Item 2).

Component 2

Generally, in both the presentation and conversation sections, the areas candidates found more challenging were general accuracy, and adjectival agreement in particular. Pronunciation of some common words and phrases proved problematic for some candidates and, at times, pronunciation and intonation impacted on understanding of what was being said. In some less successful performances, candidates' delivery was hesitant and there was other-tongue interference.

Conversation section

To varying degrees, most candidates found the conversation section more difficult than the presentation.

Some candidates had not fully prepared for the type of questions that could be asked in relation to their chosen topic and therefore found it challenging in places to respond with the detailed language and types of structures expected at National 5. Consequently, some of the language used in responses by some candidates was too limited and lacking in the detail and accuracy expected. Also, some candidates' performances offered little flow and, indeed, in a few conversations there was an overreliance on prompting from the interlocutor.

Some candidates were unable to understand questions, and either one-word answers or an irrelevant answer (in relation to the question) meant that candidates performed less successfully in this section (or parts of this section). In some instances candidates were unable to respond to a question and were also unable to ask the interlocutor for repetition or rephrasing of the question. This is one simple technique that candidates should be encouraged to use at National 5 in to sustain and maintain a natural conversation.

In some instances, prolonged conversations meant that candidates' performances became increasingly less accurate and less confident as they struggled to sustain the conversation.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

In both **Reading** and **Listening**, candidates should read questions carefully, respond giving the correct amount of information, and ensure that enough detail is given.

Detailed Marking Instructions for **Reading and Listening** are available on the SQA website and show the level of detail required for answers. Candidates should be familiar these.

In **Reading**, candidates should be familiar with, and recognise, the structures, grammar and vocabulary appropriate for this level, such as present participles (for example, *sabiendo hablar inglés* (Text 1) and *actuando en el teatro* (Text 2); different tenses and forms of verbs (*supe adaptarme* (Text 1)) and vocabulary under the broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture.

In questions which have two parts (for example, Reading Text 1 questions (b)(i) and (b)(ii), candidates should read both parts of the question together and locate the information in the text for both parts to ensure that they then write their response to each question in the appropriate space.

Candidates should re-read their responses to check English expression.

For **Listening**, candidates must be familiar with a range of vocabulary from the four broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. They should be able to understand verbs and tenses as well as nouns and noun phrases. Candidates must ensure they give detail and where two pieces of information are required, they should give the detail for each of the two points.

In **Writing**, candidates should develop ways of addressing the first four bullet points which allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs, persons of verbs and tenses. Structures such as *Mis amigos dicen que soy responsable y que pueden confiar en mí* show some attempt at using a variety of structures. It is pleasing to note the examples of candidates' performances where tenses other than the present have been employed, for example the use of the past tense with work experience.

In addition, candidates should also develop the necessary language skills to address the unpredictable bullet points. To do this, candidates need to be able to apply knowledge of language to accurately address these points. They should develop skills in using the dictionary correctly, recognising verbs and being able to change the infinitive into first person forms and into other tenses (such as future, conditional, past) and recognising noun forms. They should practice and develop these skills to be fully prepared for this part of the writing task. Candidates should be able to provide at least one accurate sentence or short paragraph for each of the two unpredictable bullet points.

Component 2: Performance

To prepare candidates, centres should continue to refer closely to the *National 5 Modern Languages Performance: Talking General Assessment Information* document and the *National 5 Modern Languages Performance: Talking Assessment Task*. Both these documents should be considered in conjunction with the *Productive Grammar Grid for National 5 Modern Languages*.

Centres should continue to guide candidates in relation to the types of structures, phrases, vocabulary and grammar that might be used during the talking performance, and should advise candidates in relation to detailed language. Some candidates performed with greater success and accessed higher pegged marks with contexts that lend themselves more easily to using a greater variety of structures and tenses. Centres should consider this in advance of the assessment event, advising candidates accordingly.

Some centres encouraged candidates to personalise their presentation and/or use a range of contexts or topics for the presentations (from the same centre). It is good practice to encourage this. In a few cases, the context of the conversation section elicited responses from candidates that included the same (or very similar) vocabulary and structures that were used in the presentation.

While centres can use a variety of methods to record candidates' performances, centres are kindly requested to verify the quality of the audio recording before submitting to SQA for external verification.

External verification activities highlighted that in some cases where candidates' presentations were extended in length, this impacted on the candidates' ability to sustain the conversation section using detailed language. Centres are encouraged to advise candidates on the length of their proposed presentation. Conversely, some performances were shorter than the recommended duration, and this meant that in some cases candidates were unable to access the higher pegged marks.

Finally, the interlocutor plays an important role in managing the assessment event to ensure that candidates get the most out of their talking performance. Interlocutors are encouraged to use a wide variety of open-ended questions that will allow the candidate to expand on answers. Interlocutors should also be mindful to remain flexible and to tailor the length of conversation section. For example, interlocutors can support candidates by gauging how the candidate interacts on the day of the assessment event, and can shorten or lengthen the intended duration of the conversation section as appropriate.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
Number of resulted entries in 2014	2923

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	56.9%	56.9%	1663	69
B	18.4%	75.3%	539	59
C	14.0%	89.4%	410	49
D	3.6%	93.0%	105	44
No award	7.0%	-	206	-