



Course report 2022

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| Subject | Spanish |
| Level | National 5 |

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

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|------------------------------------|------|
| Number of resulted entries in 2022 | 5765 |
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

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|-----------------|------------|------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|------|-----------------------|-----|
| A | Percentage | 59.2 | Cumulative percentage | 59.2 | Number of candidates | 3410 | Minimum mark required | 76 |
| B | Percentage | 17.6 | Cumulative percentage | 76.8 | Number of candidates | 1015 | Minimum mark required | 62 |
| C | Percentage | 12.8 | Cumulative percentage | 89.6 | Number of candidates | 740 | Minimum mark required | 48 |
| D | Percentage | 7.0 | Cumulative percentage | 96.6 | Number of candidates | 405 | Minimum mark required | 34 |
| No award | Percentage | 3.4 | Cumulative percentage | N/A | Number of candidates | 195 | Minimum mark required | N/A |

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

In the reading question paper, markers noted that there was a good range of questions across the three texts. The question paper covered the contexts of culture (text 1, an article about a Spanish actress), learning (text 2, taking a gap year) and culture (text 3, an education organisation in Nicaragua). Most markers commented that the topics were relevant and that the vocabulary and grammar assessed was in line with the National 5 Course Specification. There were questions of high, low and average demand across the three texts. As in previous years, there were few questions with no response.

Many candidates performed well in this question paper, demonstrating good reading skills at National 5 and achieving high marks.

Question paper 1: Writing

The writing question paper, which is always on the context of employability, required candidates to reply by email to a job advert. In the email, candidates should address the six bullet points listed in the job advert: four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. The unpredictable bullet points were 'what type of food you like' and 'when you are available to start'. Markers commented that both unpredictable bullet points were relevant to the job advert and straightforward for candidates to address. Most candidates performed as expected in this question paper, showing that they had prepared well.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, markers commented that there was a good level of challenge and demand in terms of the content and the questioning. The topics used were familiar and there was a range of vocabulary used across the two items.

The question paper covered the context of society. After each item, candidates answered questions in English. Many candidates did not perform as well in this question paper and grade boundaries were adjusted accordingly.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected. In the performance, candidates carry out a spoken presentation and take part in a conversation directly afterwards.

In the sample verified this year, candidates identified topics that gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities against the four aspects.

The length of the performances sampled varied. Where performances sampled went beyond or were significantly shorter than the recommended duration, neither approach was necessarily to the candidate's benefit. As noted in previous years, some candidates gave short, 'mini-presentation' answers in the conversation.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates performed better in text 1, particularly questions 1(a) and (d)(i), where most candidates gained full marks. There was a very high level of response in the reading question paper, with little evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time.

The questions following each of the three texts were clearly worded and accessible to candidates, making it straightforward for most candidates to locate the answers in the text. The supported questions worked well, especially question 3(c)(i), where most candidates gained the full 2 marks.

Candidates coped well and most were able to provide detail in their answers, for example using adjectives and adverbs. Many candidates correctly translated *mucha más independencia* (a lot more independence) in question 3(d)(iii). Questions 1(b), (c)(i) and (e), 2(c), (d)(i), (d)(ii) and (e), and 3(c)(i) were all answered very well by many candidates.

In question 2(a), there was good evidence of confident and accurate translation by many candidates of the phrase *dominar una lengua extranjera* to 'master a foreign language', avoiding the mistranslation 'dominate'. Also, in 3(d)(ii), *la confianza de sí mismo* was correctly translated by many candidates to 'self-confidence'.

It was encouraging to see that many candidates were confident with more familiar vocabulary, such as adjectives, healthy eating and work. Many candidates showed confidence and expertise in using the dictionary to help them to translate less familiar vocabulary.

Question paper 1: Writing

In the writing question paper, markers were impressed by the overall quality in many responses, especially in relation to the first four bullet points. There were many examples of detailed language, range of structure and high levels of accuracy. Many candidates were able to show that they had prepared well and were able to confidently use conjunctions and accurate adjectival agreement, as well as a range of tenses and vocabulary structures. Very few candidates did not attempt this paper and most candidates attempted to address the two unpredictable bullet points.

As in previous years, most candidates wrote a well-structured email, which was relevant to the job advert, containing language and structures that are appropriate to National 5. There was less evidence of long lists of nouns and repetition, and more candidates continue to produce a varied and succinct piece of writing. A number of candidates included language and structures that are more appropriate to Higher, but it should be noted that this is not required to achieve full marks at this level.

Many candidates were able to address bullet point 5 successfully (what type of food you like) and showed the ability to cope with forming a sentence using *me gusta, me encanta comer*

(I like to eat) or *me gusta, me encanta cocinar* (I like to cook) plus food item nouns. Some candidates also expanded on this by using *porque* (because) and giving a reason for their opinion, which is good practice. Some candidates also expressed opinion on a type or origin of food by using an adjective, for example *me gusta la comida mexicana porque es picante* (I like Mexican food because it is spicy). It was evident that most candidates were comfortable using the vocabulary of food and there was a good variety of food items and opinions expressed.

In bullet point 6 (when you are available to start) some candidates addressed this by using the phrase *puedo empezar* (I can start) plus a time phrase, and a few candidates wrote *puedo empezar mañana* (I can start tomorrow). Some successfully used the phrase *estoy disponible* (I am available), with a few expanding on this by giving details of having to sit their exams first or go on holiday beforehand, which was a realistic and detailed approach.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, markers commented that there were few no responses in both items. Many candidates coped well with the vocabulary in the context of society. Most candidates performed well in the following questions:

- ◆ question 1(a): understanding *diez años* (10 years)
- ◆ question 1(b): many candidates showed confidence in understanding places in the town, for example *polideportivo* (sports centre) and *estadio* (stadium)
- ◆ question 1(c): most candidates were able to understand the adjectives *divertidos* (funny) and *habladores* (chatty), as well as the qualifiers *muy* (very) and *bastante* (quite)
- ◆ question 2(b): understanding vocabulary on town
- ◆ question 2(c)(i): many candidates were able to give the detail required in some of the answers, for example *por la noche* (at night) or *en las calles* (in the streets)
- ◆ question 2(f): many candidates performed well, recognising vocabulary on protecting the environment, for example *reciclo papel* (I recycle paper) and *usar el transporte público* (use public transport)

Performance–talking

The overall quality of candidates' performances sampled this session was good.

Candidates performed very well in the presentation. Many candidates were awarded pegged marks 10 or 8. This is as expected, as this section of the performance can be thoroughly prepared ahead of the assessment.

Candidates coped well in the conversation and, among the samples verified, most candidates were awarded pegged marks 12 or 9. Many confident performances demonstrated very good language resource.

Most candidates sustained the conversation well, despite any errors, and were awarded 5 or 3 marks for this. Candidates who were able to use interjections and ask relevant questions could sustain the conversation more confidently. Very few candidates in the samples verified were awarded 1 or 0 marks for sustaining the conversation.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

For some candidates there was an element of detail required in some of the answers, which they did not provide, and therefore they were not able to access the higher marks. There were a lot of examples of poor spelling in English, but markers took a sympathetic approach to this. Markers commented on the poor handwriting of some candidates, making responses more challenging to read and mark.

Some candidates missed marks as a result of not providing either qualifiers or detail in their answers, not looking closely enough at the detail in the text itself, not thinking about the context of the word, and some common mistranslations, for example:

Text 1

- ◆ question 1(c)(ii): some candidates mistranslated *rodar* to 'to roll', which does not make sense in this context
- ◆ question 1(d)(ii): some candidates failed to translate *nunca* (never). This is a common time phrase that National 5 candidates should know

Text 2

- ◆ question 2(b): this tested two common words, *mu*y (very) and *más* (more), and some candidates omitted one or both in their answers, and a few candidates mixed them up, which was incorrect translation
- ◆ question 2(f): some candidates failed to translate *capacidad de* (capacity, ability to, to be able to) in their answer and only wrote 'overcome difficulties' or 'face challenges' and could not gain the mark

Text 3

- ◆ question 3(a): some candidates mistranslated *tienen sus propias ideas* as 'have proper ideas' instead of 'have their own ideas'. Similarly, some mistranslated *ganar más dinero* as 'earn a lot of money' instead of 'earn more money'
- ◆ question 3(b): *mejorar las condiciones de vida de los niños y sus familias* (improve the living conditions of children and their families). Some candidates stopped their answer at 'children' and did not include 'families' in their answer and could not gain the mark
- ◆ question 3(c)(ii): most candidates performed poorly in this question and for a number of reasons. Some did not have good enough knowledge of Spanish numbers and mistranslated *treinta* (30) or *diez* (10). Some lacked detail in their answer and omitted the word *últimos* (last) or mistranslated *aumento* (increase). There were also several cases where candidates' translation in English had a different mathematical meaning, for example 'an increase to 30%' as opposed to 'an increase of 30%'
- ◆ question 3(d)(i): some candidates did not gain the mark because they mistranslated *mejorar* as 'help' or 'increase' and some wrongly translated *jóvenes* (young people) as 'children' (*niños*). Some candidates lacked detail in their answer and did not translate *laborales* (work, labour). A few candidates translated *laborales de los jóvenes* as 'child labour', which was incorrect

Question paper 1: Writing

The standard of responses for the writing question paper this year was very good overall, despite gaps in learning caused by the pandemic. Markers commented positively on the responses by candidates.

In terms of content and language resource, many candidates are comfortable with what is required for the writing question paper. However, accuracy rather than content is still the main challenge for some candidates, both in the predictable and unpredictable bullet points, and in particular accuracy with verbs.

Poor dictionary use, mother tongue and/or other language interference, and literal translations of idiomatic phrases were again the three main factors affecting accuracy. Other common errors included omitting the definite article after *me gusta* (I like), when candidates should have written, for example *me gusta la carne* (I like meat). Some candidates forgot to make the phrase *me gusta* plural when expressing opinion on more than one item and they should have written, for example *me gustan las patatas* (I like potatoes).

There were other instances of poor spelling of common words such as *Escocia* (Scotland) and *Edimburgo* (Edinburgh). There were a small number of candidates who applied for a job in Madrid when the job advertised was in Malaga. Although they were not penalised for doing so, it is good practice to check the job details in the advert when referring to them.

In bullet point 6, there was some inaccuracy with the verb phrases, and confusion with *ser* and *estar* (to be) when using *disponible* (available). There were also some candidates who experienced difficulty in expressing simple time phrases, such as *en el verano* (in the summer), *a principios de julio* (at the start of July) and *la semana que viene* (next week). Some candidates lacked accuracy in verbs and used the infinitive *poder* (to be able to) when they should have conjugated the verb to *puedo* (I can) and then added a relevant infinitive, such as *empezar* (start).

There was, as always, challenge in the two unpredictable bullet points. A few candidates were unsuccessful in addressing both of these and were therefore awarded a 12, in line with the detailed marking instructions.

There were a few candidates who did not manage to produce an acceptable job application. In some cases, they produced a long piece of writing that did not meet the criteria to gain 12 marks due to lack of accuracy or, in some cases, a few lines were written that were accurate, but not enough detail was provided for the level.

Markers commented on the poor handwriting of some candidates, making responses more challenging to read and mark.

Question paper 2: Listening

Many candidates found the question paper to be challenging this year, and it was evident that preparation and practice had been affected by the disruption of the pandemic.

Candidates were unable to access all of the marks for a number of reasons. There was a lack of accuracy in translation, for example:

- ◆ question 1(d): most candidates found this challenging, with few recognising the phrases *la oportunidad de viajar por todo el mundo* (the opportunity to travel around the world) or *un ambiente genial* (a great atmosphere). As in previous years, some candidates got mixed up with *el medio ambiente* and wrote 'great environment', which was incorrect
- ◆ question 1(e): this was challenging for most candidates, with only a few candidates gaining the full 2 marks. Candidates failed to include correct translation of *siempre* (always), *evitar* (to avoid) and *nunca* (never)
- ◆ question 2(a): *antigua* was mistranslated as 'antique', which is not an appropriate description of a town
- ◆ question 2(c)(ii): there was confusion between *más* (more) and *mucho* (lots of) and some candidates failed to include these qualifiers in their answers
- ◆ question 2(d): many candidates omitted the word 'very' in the translation of *muy bonito* (very pretty) and simply wrote 'pretty or beautiful', which was not enough detail to gain the mark. Some candidates omitted the word 'less' in the translation of *menos estresante* (less stressful) and wrote 'stressful' or 'stress free', which were both incorrect

This year, many candidates found both the more challenging questions and the more basic questions difficult. There was a lack of confidence and competence in this skill for many candidates. Listening is a skill that is developed in class with teacher or lecturer support and this was lacking during the pandemic. As in reading, there were examples of poor spelling and expression in English, but again, marks were awarded where communication was achieved. Markers commented on the poor handwriting of some candidates, making responses more challenging to read and mark.

Performance–talking

In the samples verified, some candidates found the level of grammatical accuracy and sustaining this throughout the performance difficult.

Weaker performances by candidates highlighted errors that detracted from the overall impression. Some made more serious errors, for example there were problems with the gender of nouns, incorrect agreement of adjectives, problems with verb conjugation, missing words, or incorrect word order. In some instances, candidates did not use enough detailed language and this detracted from the overall quality.

In some performances, pronunciation and intonation were not always sufficient to be understood by a speaker of the language and this detracted from the overall quality of the performance.

Some candidates found the conversation of the performance more demanding as it is less predictable and involves a series of questions. Most candidates at this level were awarded a pegged mark of 12 or lower for this.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read questions carefully, then respond by giving the correct amount of information, ensuring that enough detail is given, as required at National 5
- ◆ know that if qualifiers are in the text, they should appear in the answer
- ◆ refer to the detailed marking instructions for reading, writing and listening (available in the National 5 Spanish past papers on SQA's website) as these show the level of detail required for answers. Candidates should be familiar with the approach behind these, for example where a candidate should provide detail to access the full range of marks
- ◆ make their handwriting legible
- ◆ regularly practise answering exam-type questions with a similar structure and standard to the course assessments

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are familiar with, and recognise the structures, grammar, and detailed language appropriate for this level
- ◆ are able to translate these familiar words, for example *niños*, *jóvenes*, *mejorar* and *propio* and the detail in these longer phrases: *no saben qué quieren hacer en el futuro*, *disfrutar de unas vacaciones inolvidables* and *tienen la oportunidad de ganar más dinero*, albeit with the use of a dictionary
- ◆ continue to develop dictionary skills as part of the course and think about the context of a word in order to decide which meaning is most appropriate
- ◆ know they must translate the whole answer, for example right to the end of the sentence

Question paper 1: Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ develop ways of addressing the first four predictable bullet points that allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs and tenses
- ◆ are able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points
- ◆ practise manipulating the language in a range of unfamiliar bullet points
- ◆ know that they are not required to provide a long formal introduction and/or end to the job application as this can prevent candidates from performing well in the required areas of the job application
- ◆ avoid writing long lists and try to write legibly
- ◆ take time to check spelling and accents in a bilingual dictionary

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are familiar with a range of basic vocabulary from the four contexts of society, learning, employability, culture
- ◆ have knowledge of words and phrases, including a good range of adjectives, and know and understand a range of tenses and verb forms
- ◆ pay attention to detail, and are familiar with qualifiers like *muy* (very), *mucho* (lots of) and *bastante* (quite) and comparatives like *más* (more) and *menos* (less) so they can include this detail in their answers
- ◆ have opportunities to use equipment to practise listening to Spanish as in the exam

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ have strategies, in the conversation subsection, for asking questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to use when they have not understood any aspect of the conversation
- ◆ practise talking skills in preparation for the performance–talking

To help when preparing candidates for future assessment, teachers and lecturers can refer to Understanding Standards examples of National 5 performances published on SQA's secure website, and to the following information in the National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification:

- ◆ 'course assessment structure: performance–talking' section for the recommended duration of the presentation and the conversation, to ensure candidates can demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of the task
- ◆ 'appendix 1: course support notes', relating to the 'Approaches to learning and teaching: talking' section, for examples of how to develop candidates' talking skills, and suggestions of talking activities as part of learning and teaching
- ◆ appendix 2: productive grammar grid, for information on the level of language

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).