



Course Report 2018

Subject	Spanish
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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 Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Overall, candidates performed well this year in reading, writing, listening, and assignment – writing. There were examples of very good responses in all of the question papers and the assignment– writing. Markers commented in their reports that there were few poor performances in the three skills of reading, writing and listening. The question papers covered the four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. In reading and listening, overall the sections were balanced in terms of high, low and average demand questions. Markers noted that there were a wide range of questions in the reading and the listening question papers.

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

In the reading question paper, markers noted that there were a couple of questions which challenged candidates in terms of amount of detail required. In this question paper, candidates read three texts of approximately 150–200 words written in Spanish and then answer in English the questions that follow each text. The three texts in this year's paper covered the contexts of learning (text 1 — students and technology), culture (text 2 — beach cinema) and society (text 3 — eco-club for young people).

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

In the writing question paper, candidates read a job advert in Spanish for a cinema cashier, and are required to write and e-mail in Spanish applying for the job, by addressing six bullet points. The first four bullet points were: name, age and where they 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 the type of films you like, what you do in your free time.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, markers commented that there was the appropriate amount of challenge and demand in terms of the questioning and the content. The question paper covered the context of employability. Candidates listened to item 1, a short monologue of approximately 1 minute, in which Elena talked about her work experience. In item 2 candidates listened to Paco talking to Elena about his part-time job and future plans. After each item, candidates answered questions in English.

Component 4: assignment–writing

Candidates completed the assignment–writing for the first time this year. Submissions were completed in centres over time, and marked by SQA. Candidates generally performed well in the assignment–writing. The grade boundaries for C and A were raised by 2 marks as a result of increased accessibility evidenced in relation to the new assignment – writing in its introductory year. Such adjustment enables the national standard to be maintained from year to year.

Component 5: performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected.

In the performance–talking, candidates are required to carry out a spoken presentation and then take part in a conversation directly afterwards.

Centres are familiar with how this coursework task works, and it is the same format year on year. Revised performance–talking marking instructions were published for session 2017–18; however, the aim and format of the task remained unchanged.

The revision from session 2017–18 requires candidates to cover a different context in the conversation to that used in the presentation. In addition, the recommended duration of the conversation was extended from 4–5 minutes to 5–6 minutes from session 2017–18.

In both the presentation and conversation sections, candidates are required to employ detailed language at National 5. The four aspects of the performance (see below) remain unchanged compared to previous sessions.

The marking instructions allowed centres to mark candidates' performances with confidence. The majority of centres sampled this session, marked candidates' performances in line with national standards.

In the performance–talking, candidates are required to demonstrate their abilities against the four aspects of the performance: content, accuracy, language resource and interaction. As outlined in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*, the role of the assessor includes giving candidates comments on the choice of their topics (from at least two contexts).

In the sample of centres verified this year, it was clear assessors had encouraged candidates to identify topics (from two of the contexts) which gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their ability against the four aspects.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

The performance of candidates across all three papers and the assignment–writing this year was pleasing; many candidates were able to access the vast majority of questions in the reading and listening question papers, providing accurate responses, which showed their comprehension of the texts. In the writing question paper, markers noted that this year again many candidates responded well to the overall task, and in particular coped well with the two unpredictable bullet points. This was the first year of the assignment–writing and markers were pleased with the level of writing being produced and some excellent responses from candidates.

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

In the reading question paper, it was clear that for the vast majority of candidates, the content of each of the three texts was appropriate and relevant, and many candidates coped well with the three texts. There was a very high level of response in the reading section of the question paper, with very little evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time. As was the case last year, there were few questions in the reading paper with no response.

Markers noted that 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 from the wording of the questions. Questions (d)(i) and (d)(ii) were both answered well by most candidates. Those candidates who answered used good, clear English expression and were able to access the full range of marks available.

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

In this question paper, markers noted that a large number of candidates had addressed all the bullet points fully. A wide range of vocabulary and structures were evident in some responses, and these were awarded 16 or 20 pegged marks, and equally in the same pegged marks range, there were good levels of accuracy across the task. There were many examples this year of responses with a good range of detailed language using good expression, structures and accuracy throughout, and many examples where the content of the writing was clearly relevant and consistent with a job application e-mail. Many candidates this year showed a high level of accuracy, in particular in addressing the last two unpredictable bullet points, using a range of language structures and resource to address these points. Many candidates had already addressed the last bullet point, 'What do you do in your free time' at other points in their responses.

As in previous years, there were good examples of candidates moving away from listing (such as personal characteristics or school subjects) and using a range of structures. Many candidates were able to maintain a good level of accuracy throughout their writing, for example 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.

There were fewer examples than in previous years of candidates including irrelevant content in their responses, and almost all candidates attempted the last two unpredictable bullet points.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, markers noted there were very few 'no response' answers, which indicates that the context of employability was a familiar vocabulary area to the majority of candidates. Item 1 also included vocabulary from the context of society (*era muy simpatico ... me llevaba bien ... cenamos juntos*) and item 2 included vocabulary such as *en el extranjero ... periodismo y política ... independizarme ... viajar por*.

There was evidence from many candidates of techniques used, for example underlining key words in the questions and/or notes at the side, and there were very few 'no response' answers this year. Overall, many candidates knew a lot of the vocabulary covered in both items.

Component 4: assignment–writing

In this, the first year of the assignment–writing, candidates produced very good pieces of work in line with the new guidelines issued by SQA. There was a range of topics in evidence from each of the three contexts of society, learning and culture. Some examples of these were family, healthy living, school, holidays and film reviews. Most candidates used detailed language appropriate to National 5, with some excellent examples using some structures at higher levels.

The overall presentation of the candidates' work was very good, and the vast majority of centres had followed the SQA guidelines around the assessment conditions and used the appropriate SQA paperwork. Most candidates had well-structured essays written in paragraphs with a clear beginning and a conclusion. The majority of assignments had a range of vocabulary, including tenses, and most assignments used fuller sentences rather than listing, also using a wide range of reasons, ideas and opinions.

Component 5: performance–talking

Based on the performance–talking tasks sampled from centres this session, the overall quality of candidate performance was high.

Presentation (10 marks)

Candidates performed very well in the presentation section of the performance. Based on the centres verified, the majority of candidates were awarded pegged marks 8 or 10. This is as expected, given that this section of the performance can be thoroughly prepared ahead of the assessment.

Conversation (15 marks) and sustaining the conversation (5 marks)

Candidates coped well in this section and among the centres sampled, the majority of candidates were awarded pegged marks 15 or 12.

As regards 'sustaining the conversation', most candidates sustained the conversation well, despite any errors, and were awarded 5 or 3 marks for this aspect. Very few candidates were awarded 1 or 0 marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

Many candidates this year found the reading accessible and were able to gain marks of over 25/30. However, for some candidates, there was an element of detail required in some of the answers which they did not provide, and they were not able to access the higher marks.

The following shows examples of the marks lost to some candidates, as a result of not providing either qualifiers or detail in their answers, or not looking closely at the detail in the texts themselves.

Text 1

Question (b)(i): caused some candidates difficulty due to the mistranslation of *mapas conceptuales*.

Question (b)(ii): some candidates this challenging and they did not show understanding of the phrase *avisos de la entrada*. Many misused the dictionary in this question.

Text 2

Question (a)(i): there were instances of candidates not accessing the full 2 marks for the supported question, as they had not read, or had misread, *hasta el 28 de agosto* and selected the wrong box 'It opens on the 28th August'. Equally, there seemed to be among some candidates, a lack of understanding of the number used to describe the films (*películas de los años setenta*) and some had translated this as '70 year-old films'.

Text 3

A lack of accurate detail again played a part in some candidates not accessing the full range of marks.

Question (c)(i): some candidates had not provided all the detail required for *sacan fotos del daño medioambiental* and had provided answers such as 'took photos of damage in the area'. Another example of mistranslation was in the same question, where *hacen un mural en el club* was translated by some as 'they make a mural/wall of the club'.

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

The standard of responses for the writing question paper this year was very good, and all markers commented favorably on the responses and how the vast majority of candidates had answered this question.

Most candidates made an effort to include a range of detailed vocabulary and structures appropriate to National 5. In terms of content and language resource, many candidates are comfortable with what is required of the writing question paper. On the other hand, accuracy rather than content, is still the main challenge for some candidates. Indeed, very few responses fell short on content.

Poor dictionary use, mother tongue/other language interference and literal translations of idiomatic phrases were again the three main factors affecting accuracy. There were not so many examples of dictionary misuse this year, but markers noted that there were examples of responses where inaccuracies were either concentrated in the last two unpredictable bullet points, or in some cases were throughout the question paper. The verb *gustar* proved to be challenging for many candidates, and markers noted there were a lot of candidates

writing phrases such as *me gusta películas de ...* and then using phrases such as *porque es ...* It was disappointing to see that some candidates had difficulties in accurately using the verb *gustar*.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, it was the level of accuracy in translation required to gain marks that led to some candidates not accessing the marks. There also seemed to be some unfamiliarity with certain words or phrases that should be expected at National 5. For example in item 1 question (d)(ii), many candidates did not accurately translate the verb *cenamos* and instead opted for 'they ate' or even 'they had lunch'. Some candidates in item 1(b) did not provide all the detail necessary for the mark (for example they forgot to write that her house was far 'from the office').

In item 2, words and phrases such as *periodismo* (d)(i), *el extranjero* (c), *tendré que* (d)(ii), *viajar por* (e)(i) and *ahorrar* (e)(ii) proved to be unfamiliar to some candidates.

This year markers did not see as many candidates being general in their answers, and many candidates attempted to answer the questions with answers related to the question vocabulary areas. However, candidates need to understand that there is a level of accuracy and familiarity with the vocabulary required in their answers, and centres should ensure there is sufficient revision of vocabulary areas built in at appropriate points in the National 5 course.

Component 4: assignment–writing

In some of the assignment–writing submitted, there was basic reliance on verbs such as *es*, *son*, *hay* which were repeated throughout. Where the vocabulary was repetitive, it did detract from the overall quality of the writing. Some candidates also tried to use structures with which they had less familiarity or understanding, and this resulted in several serious errors across their assignment–writing.

In terms of the topics addressed, markers noted that some topics tended to lend themselves to basic language, which did not reflect the level of detailed language required for National 5. For example the topic of family proved to be, for some candidates, a topic which may not lend itself to enough variety in language resource, or enough range of reasons/opinions/ideas. In some other assignments, candidates addressing the topic of family or free time tended to veer off this topic and stray into many other areas.

In some assignments, some candidates had not given a title, or had a title in English, or had not ticked the context box. Centres should re-read the assessment conditions guidance in order to ensure candidates' work is presented as per SQA guidelines.

Component 5: performance–talking

Conversation

Some candidates found the conversation section of the performance–talking more demanding than the presentation, as it is less predictable and involves a series of questions. Among the centres sampled, approximately as many candidates were awarded pegged marks 12 and 9 as those awarded pegged mark 15. A minority of candidates scored pegged marks 6 or 3.

The level of grammatical accuracy was an area highlighted by the Spanish verification team. Among other aspects, errors which detracted from the overall impression were a feature of weaker performances.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

As in previous years, the advice for both reading and listening is that candidates should read questions carefully then respond giving the correct amount of information, and ensure that enough detail is given. At National 5, there is an amount of detail required, so candidates should ensure that if qualifiers are in the text, they too should appear in the answer.

Detailed marking instructions for reading and listening are available in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*, and show the level of detail required for answers.

Candidates should be familiar with the approach behind these ie where detail is required they need this to access the full range of marks.

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

Candidates should be familiar with and recognise the structures, grammar and detailed language appropriate for this level. For example, Spanish National 5 candidates should know the accurate translation of *todo el mundo* (text 2 question (b)(i)), as some candidates are still translating this as 'people all over the world'. Close attention to detail is also important, and candidates should practise giving detail to answers.

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

Candidates have been very well prepared by centres this year, given the overall performance in this part of the course assessment. 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. Candidates should be able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points, so centres are strongly encouraged to allow candidates to practise manipulating the language in a wide range of unfamiliar bullet points.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, candidates should be familiar with a range of basic vocabulary from the four broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. As well as knowledge of words and phrases, they should also know and understand a range of tenses and verb forms. Attention to detail is also key, and centres should ensure candidates are familiar with qualifiers like *muy* and understand the importance of including this detail in their answers.

Component 4: assignment–writing

Candidates should aim to have a strong focus on one of the contexts and a topic; they should ensure they include a range of ideas, opinions and reasons and not use examples of listing. They should also ensure there is a clear introduction and conclusion to the piece of work, which also should include a range of verbs, verb forms and some tenses to show markers their ability to use language resource and variety. The assignment should be structured in paragraphs and the title should clearly relate to the content of the overall piece of work.

The grade boundaries for C and A were raised by 2 marks as a result of increased accessibility evidenced in relation to the new assignment – writing in its introductory year. Such adjustment enables the national standard to be maintained from year to year.

Component 5: performance–talking

In some of the performances sampled, the grammatical errors included gender errors and problems with agreement of adjectives and verbs.

Centres are encouraged to continue to include grammar practice and coverage of the rules of the language as an integral part of learning and teaching. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to use a variety of persons and tenses, where appropriate. The assignment–writing coursework task should contribute towards aiding candidates’ understanding of how language works.

Many confident performances demonstrated very good language resource. In some instances, the language was not detailed and this detracted from the overall quality.

In the conversation section, centres are encouraged to ensure candidates have a variety of strategies, for example asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to say when they have not understood any aspect of the conversation.

Candidates who were able to use interjections, ask relevant questions and use idiomatic phrases were able to sustain the conversation well. Centres are encouraged to continue to prepare candidates in this way.

Where candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should continue to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic. Assessors should give candidates the appropriate response or thinking time before doing this.

The length of the performances sampled varied, and centres are advised to refer to the advice on the recommended duration of the presentation and the conversation. This is to make sure candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of the task at National 5 as provided in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*. A few of the performances went beyond the recommended duration and others were significantly shorter than the recommended duration. Neither approach is necessarily to the candidate’s benefit.

As noted in previous years’ National 5 Spanish course reports, some candidates gave what appeared to be short, ‘mini-presentation’ answers in the conversation. While candidates may wish to prepare language and phrases for topic-related questions, centres are encouraged to continue to put open-ended questions to candidates, which can elicit detailed language in the answers.

Centres are also encouraged to put a variety of questions to their candidates, even where the same or similar topics have been selected by candidates from within the same centre. In turn, this provides for personalisation and choice and provides scope for candidates to produce a more varied conversation.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	4489
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	4937
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	58.1%	58.1%	2868	86
B	19.0%	77.1%	939	74
C	12.9%	90.0%	635	62
D	7.4%	97.4%	366	50
No award	2.6%	-	129	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional 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 every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.