



Course Report 2017:

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 and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Overall, this year's candidates performed well in Reading, Writing and Listening. There were examples of very good performances in all components of the question papers, and markers remarked in their reports that there were very few poor performances in the three components. In line with the Course Assessment Specification requirements, the question papers covered the four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture.

Markers noted that there were a wide range of questions in both the Reading and Listening question papers. In Reading, there were a couple of questions that challenged candidates in terms of amount of detail required. In Listening, markers commented that there was the appropriate amount of challenge and demand in terms of the questioning and content.

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 answer (in English) the questions that followed each text. The three texts in this year's paper covered the contexts of learning (text 1 – mobile phones in the classroom), employability (text 2 – online recruitment agency) and culture (text 3 – travel agencies).

In **Writing**, candidates read a job advert for a waiter/waitress in Spanish and responded to a task with six bullet points, of which the first four were predictable, ie: 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 unpredictable bullet points were: your level of Spanish and why you want this job. Candidates wrote an e-mail applying for the job in Spanish by addressing these six bullet points.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening

In the **Listening** question paper, which covered the context of society, candidates listened to Item 1, a short monologue of approximately one minute, in which Ana talked about technology. In Item 2 candidates listened to Ana talking to Javi about television. After each Item, candidates answered questions in English.

Component 3: performance: Talking

The talking coursework component performed as expected and is the same task year on year.

Revised marking instructions were published for session 2016–17, but the aim and format of the task remained unchanged. In the talking performance, candidates are still required to carry out a spoken presentation and then take part in a conversation directly afterwards.

In both the presentation and conversation sections, candidates have to employ detailed language at National 5 level. The four aspects of the performance were also unchanged.

Centres are familiar with how this coursework task works, and feedback from the Spanish verification team confirmed that the revised 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, candidates should aim to demonstrate their abilities against the four aspects: content, accuracy, language resource and interaction.

Assessors play an important role in that prior to the assessment they guide candidates in the choice of topics and contexts. In the sample of centres verified this year, candidates had been encouraged to select topics/contexts that gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability against the four aspects. The topics/contexts selected by candidates provided scope for them to use detailed spoken language.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

The performance of candidates across all three question papers this year was pleasing, and many candidates were able to access the vast majority of questions in the Reading, Writing and Listening question papers, providing accurate responses which showed their comprehension of the texts.

In Writing, 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.

In **Reading**, 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. This section provided a good opportunity for candidates to show progression from the internal unit requirements to the external course assessment of Reading.

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 few questions in the Reading paper with no response.

The questions following each piece of text 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. In particular, questions 2(d)(i) (*Why did he want a job?: to pay for his everyday life*), 3(a) (*According to the article, travel agencies have suffered losses in recent years. What reasons does the article give for this? State any two: the economic crisis/booking flights online/buying nights in a hotel from a mobile*) and question 3(c)(iv)

(According to Javier, what do travel agencies have to do to survive?: offer something different/anticipate customers' wishes) were all answered well by most candidates. Candidates who answered using good, clear English expression were able to access the range of marks available.

In **Writing**, it was noted that a large number of candidates had addressed all the bullet points fully. A wide range of vocabulary and structures was evident in the writings, which were awarded 16 or 20, and equally in the same pegged marks there were good levels of accuracy across the task. There were many examples again this year of detailed writings with a good range of 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 addressing the last two unpredictable bullet points in particular, with the use of such phrases as *'llevo seis años estudiando español y lo hablo con fluidez'*, *'deseo este trabajo simplemente para costear mi vida'*, and *'me gustaría trabajar en el extranjero y aprender más sobre la cultura española'*.

Throughout the writing, there was good evidence of candidates moving away from listing (eg in school subjects) to providing examples of detailed language and structures such as *'las asignaturas que estudio este curso son muy importantes para mi futuro, como por ejemplo las mates y la física porque me gustaría ser ingeniero'*. There was also evidence of good verb control, with many candidates applying a good level of accuracy to a wide range of verbs. In addition, it should be noted that the present tense in the work experience bullet point is just as valid as using the preterite tense and/or the imperfect tense. 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.

There were fewer examples than in previous years of candidates including irrelevant content in the writing task, and indeed, the vast majority of candidates attempted the last two unpredictable bullet points.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening

In **Listening**, markers noted there were very few 'No Response' answers, which indicates that the topic areas of technology and television were familiar vocabulary areas to candidates. Item 1 (technology) also included vocabulary such as free time expressions (eg *'escuchar música'*, *'jugando en el jardín'* and *'veía los dibujos animados'*) and time expressions (*'cuando era más joven'*, *'hace cinco años'*). Item 2 (television) also included vocabulary from the areas of daily routine (*'me levanto tarde'*), chores (*'tengo que hacer la cama... pasear al perro'*) and family members (*'mis padres...mi hermano...mi abuela'*).

The wording of the questions was clear and enabled candidates to pick out the vocabulary that was required for the answers. In question 1(a), knowledge of vocabulary relating to the area of where you live was accessible to most candidates, and allowed the candidates to use either of two pieces of information: *Where does Ana live? State any one thing: '...vivo en un pueblo pequeño a unos treinta kilómetros de la ciudad'*. Equally, candidates did well in answering the supported marks questions 1(b) and 2(b), and many were able to access the

information required for the questions around the television programmes, such as 2(e) *Why does she like music programmes? State any one thing: 'porque son divertidos y me relajan'.*

Component 3: Performance: Talking

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

Presentation section (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 section (15 marks) and sustaining the conversation (5 marks)

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

With regards to the 'sustaining the conversation' aspect, most candidates sustained the conversation well, despite any errors, and were awarded 3 or 5 marks for this aspect.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Reading

Many candidates this year found the Reading paper accessible. However, for some candidates, some of the answers required an element of detail that they did not provide, and thus were not able to access the higher marks.

In text 1 in both question 1(b) (According to the article, what are the advantages of educational apps? State two things) and question 1(d) (Carlota Fuentes Girón believes her son spends too much time on his phone in class. What does she think school is the ideal time for? Give details of two things), some candidates did not translate correctly the words *alumno* and *compañeros de clase*, mistranslating these as 'class' and 'friends' respectively. In text 1 question (f) (What does Juan believe a teacher will say at the start of a class in the future? State two things), some candidates omitted the translation of *en vez de* and thus were not awarded the second mark. At National 5 level candidates should be looking for qualifiers and detail in their answers, even when they are 1-mark questions.

In text 2, there were two questions that seemed to challenge some candidates. Question 2(c) (*On the Primerpaso website, you can find job offers from many companies. What do these companies look for? State two things*) required candidates to include the translation of *jóvenes* in their answer. Without this word, answering correctly with part-time jobs and fixed-

term contracts did not actually answer the question. In this same question, there were many mis-translations of *contratos de plazo fijo* (for example: fixed contracts, full-time contracts, fixed contracts of time). Question 2(e) (*The website also offers advice about preparing for an interview*) required candidates to complete the sentence. Some candidates, by using the singular in English, missed out on the mark, as 'value of the company' is not the same as 'values of the company'.

In text 3, again there were some mistranslations of words which appear straightforward but, if mistranslated, do not make sense in the answer. For example, in question 3(b) (*The future seems more positive for travel agencies. What new business is there? State two things*) *el turismo de solteros* was mistranslated as 'tourism for single women' or 'single tourism'. In question 3(c)(i) (*What does his agency specialise in?*), some candidates had difficulty in translating *vacaciones fuera de lo normal* using instead expressions such as 'outdoor' or 'abnormal holidays', or 'holidays away from the normal'.

Writing

Once again, the standard of the writing task this year was very good, and all markers commented favorably on the writing tasks and how the vast majority of candidates had answered this question.

Most candidates made an effort to include a range of vocabulary and structures appropriate to National 5 level. In terms of content and language resource, many candidates are comfortable with what is required of the writing task. On the other hand, accuracy, rather than content, is still the main challenge for some candidates. Indeed, there were very few writings that 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 writings where inaccuracies were either concentrated in the last two unpredictable bullet points or in some cases were throughout the writing task. Markers found that there were job writings that had a high level of accuracy in the first four bullet points, but in the last two the level of control was much lower and more inaccuracies appeared, in particular dictionary misuse (eg some candidates took '*plano*' to mean 'level' in the dictionary when attempting to address bullet point 5).

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening

With this particular skill, candidates can attempt to 'guess' answers where they are not sure of the Spanish in the Item. Additionally, candidates can also mistranslate an item of vocabulary or a phrase when they mishear a word or wrongly guess the meaning of a word or phrase. This year markers saw these two issues in some of the candidate scripts. In particular, there were some items of vocabulary where some candidates were clearly not familiar with what was being said.

In question 1(c) (*Ana's parents did not allow her to have a mobile phone when she was younger. How did she spend her free time? State two things*) some candidates did not understand '*dibujos animados*' and translated it as 'drawing animals'. Also, in question 2(c)

(When does Ana watch television? State any one thing), some candidates mistranslated *me levanto tarde* as 'she wakes up late'.

Question 2(g)(i) (*Ana almost never watches television with her family. Why is this? Give two reasons*) required some detail and some candidates omitted the fact that it was her brother who prefers to go out with his friends and instead wrote that she preferred going out with her friends ('...*mi hermano... prefiere salir con sus amigos*'). In question 2(g)(ii) (*What does she do instead with her family? State two things*) it was also surprising to see that some candidates were not familiar with the conjugated form of *comer* in the first person plural form (*comemos*).

This year markers did not see as many candidates being general in their answers and many candidates did attempt to answer the questions with answers related to the question vocabulary areas.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Conversation section

Some candidates found the conversation section of the Performance more demanding — it is less predictable and involves a series of questions. Nearly as many candidates were awarded pegged mark 12 as those awarded pegged mark 15. However, among the centres sampled, only a few candidates scored pegged marks 9, 6 or 3.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

As in previous years, the advice for both **Reading** and **Listening** is that candidates should read questions carefully, respond giving the correct amount of information, and ensure that enough detail is given. At National 5 level, 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 (for example, in Reading, question 1(a) *una herramienta muy poderosa* — a very powerful tool).

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

In **Reading**, candidates should be familiar with and recognise the structures, grammar and detailed language appropriate for this level. Some knowledge of expressions is useful (eg in text 1 *en vez de*, in text 2 *el trabajo de tus sueños* and in text 3 *fuera de lo normal*). Candidates should also be taught to read over their answers and to ensure that what they

have written in English is clear and makes sense. Familiarity with the vocabulary in the broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture is also useful.

In **Listening**, 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 be able to distinguish in Listening the use of the first-person singular with other forms of the verb (for example, in Item 2, *mi hermano piensa* and *comemos juntos*).

In **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 that 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: Performance: Talking

While the overall quality of candidate performance was high, pronunciation in Spanish remains one of the main difficulties for many candidates. Assessors and verifiers must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content and language resource may be in the talking performance.

In some performances, incorrect pronunciation, intonation and word stress detracted from the overall impression. Centres are encouraged to ensure their candidates use listening materials (in the classroom setting or, for example through web-based materials out of school time) as a source for modelling their pronunciation.

Grammatical accuracy was generally good, but in the conversation section some performances were weaker, with gender errors, and problems with agreement of adjectives and verbs. Centres should continue with grammar practice and encourage candidates to use a variety of persons and tenses, where appropriate.

Many performances demonstrated confident delivery and flow in the presentation, with a variety of opinions and time phrases. Centres should encourage their candidates to avoid rushing the delivery of the presentation.

In the conversation section, centres are encouraged to ensure candidates have a variety of strategies for asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to use 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 them 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. 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 document 'Modern Languages Performance-talking, General assessment information' (National 5).

A few of the conversations were prolonged, and some were significantly shorter than the recommended duration. Neither approach is necessarily to the candidate's benefit.

As noted in last year's Spanish course report, there was a tendency for some candidates to give 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 candidates, which can provide scope for shorter and more extended answers to produce a more varied conversation.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	4417
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	4489
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	58.8%	58.8%	2639	68
B	18.5%	77.3%	831	58
C	12.4%	89.7%	558	48
D	4.1%	93.8%	184	43
No award	6.2%	-	277	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.