Course Report 2015

Subject	Spanish
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question Paper

In the second year of National 5 Spanish it was very pleasing to note that candidates, on the whole performed well across all sections of the question papers: in Reading, Writing and Listening. Markers reported that there were few poor performances.

As indicated in the Course Assessment Specification for National 5 Modern Languages, the content of the Course Assessment covered all 4 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 3 texts of approximately 150–200 words in Spanish and answered the questions that followed each text in English. The three texts in this year's paper covered the contexts of employability (text 1 – young people and part-time jobs), culture (text 2 – Madrid museum) and society (text 3 – facial recognition software in cars). The overall purpose question, the question which assesses the candidates' ability to understand the overall purpose of a text, was for text 1.

In **Writing**, candidates responded to a job advert in Spanish and a task with six bullet points, of which the first four were: name, age and where they live, school/college/education experience until now, skills/interests that make you right for the job, and related work experience. The last two bullet points, the unpredictable bullet points, were: languages spoken, and reasons for application. Candidates wrote an e-mail applying for the job in Spanish by addressing these six bullet points.

In **Listening**, candidates listened to Item 1, a short monologue of approximately 1 minute in which Luisa spoke about languages. In Item 2 candidates listened to Francisco who spoke about his exams. 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

The Performance takes the form of a talking assessment and provides National 5 candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability in using detailed spoken language, to use language accurately and to maintain interaction in a natural conversation.

The Performance generates evidence of added value in the National 5 course and requires centres to make an audio recording of a talking assessment which is recorded on various formats (CD, memory stick) for the purposes of external verification by SQA. The recording also serves as a source of professional discussion and judgement among assessors.

The talking assessment is conducted in centres, face-to-face with an assessor, in a single assessment event and has two sections — a presentation (10 marks) and conversation (20 marks). Candidates are required to give a presentation in Spanish on a National 5 context of their choice (Society, Learning, Employability or Culture) of normally one to two minutes.

Directly following this presentation, candidates are required to have a conversation with the assessor on a topic that follows on naturally from the one used in the presentation. The conversation should normally last between four to five minutes.

The assessment task and marking instructions functioned as expected at National 5 for all centres verified by SQA.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

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

In **Reading**, candidates engaged with the texts, and many were able to access the full range of marks by reading the questions carefully and understanding the key sections of each text. The questions provided an appropriate level of challenge and were approached well by many candidates.

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

In **Listening**, candidates on the whole seemed to recognise a broad range of vocabulary from the context of learning in which the Listening Items were set. In particular, candidates were able to access marks where there was more than one possible answer.

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

In **Reading**, insufficient detail in a response was a major factor that led to some candidates not receiving marks. Mistranslation, poor dictionary use and poor English expression were the three other factors that contributed to candidates losing marks. Some candidates also had difficulties with the overall purpose question (text 1 question g).

In **Writing**, some candidates lost control of accuracy in the two unpredictable bullet points. In addition, some candidates focused too much on the opening and ending of the e-mail task, and lost control of accuracy.

Finally, in **Listening**, some candidates did not recognise very basic vocabulary. A lack of detail where required also let some candidates down.

Component 2: Performance

Generally speaking, among the centres that were verified by SQA, candidates performed well in the talking assessment and were well prepared for the assessment event.

The verified performances pointed to an encouraging standard of performance, with candidates generally scoring between 15 and 30 marks out of 30. Many of those were between 20 and 30 marks, and many candidates scored full marks for the performance. In some cases, candidates performed at a standard beyond National 5.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

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 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 instances of 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 on the whole have been well prepared in providing the correct amount of information. For example, in questions which required two details many candidates were able to respond with two pieces of information.

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 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.

There were many examples of the task that had been written fully, using a range of detailed language 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, with many candidates writing about the range of skills for work they have using a variety of structures, and it should be noted that candidates can address just one of these (ie skills or interests) to cover this bullet point.

Many candidates were able to address the last two unpredictable bullet points. For example, in bullet point 5 (languages spoken) *Hablo español e inglés con fluidez* and this bullet point could be found either in the main body of the e-mail or at end of the e-mail. Equally, some candidates addressed bullet point 6 at the start of their e-mail (*Quiero trabajar en Sevilla porque quisiera mejorar mi español*) or at the end with phrases such as *Quiero solicitar este puesto porque me interesa la moda*. Indeed markers commented that some candidates had addressed the last bullet point well by commenting on fashion or working in shops previously, and had therefore paid attention to the job advertised and the details provided in the scenario.

Some candidates produced detail in these unpredictable areas and wrote more in a more detailed way about their languages, eg level of fluency, length of time studying (attempting the 'desde hace' construction), and some wrote several details about why they are applying for the job, eg want to improve Spanish, have family in Spain, need to earn money for university.

In general, candidates used less detail on hobbies/sports for the bullet point on skills/interests and instead wrote more about their skills and qualities which make them effective in the workplace (rather than merely information about free time activities). This allowed for more complex language to be demonstrated and also made the job application seem more serious and realistic.

While addressing the bullet point about learning, candidates should be encouraged to avoid merely providing a list of subjects and to go beyond this and to provide more details, such as opinions and reasons for opinions, or the length of time they have been studying subjects etc. Candidates who did this usually performed better. There were not many examples of candidates merely listing subjects this year, which was pleasing to note.

Many candidates had used a wide range of expressions and used the past tenses in the work experience bullet point which, when used correctly, led to a strong performance. In this way, candidates who had provided some detail about what they did on their work experience

and opinions (eg *tenía que servir a los clientes* or *fue una experiencia muy positiva*) in general performed well.

Listening

The topics of languages and exams were generally dealt with well. Each Item covered a good range of vocabulary appropriate to National 5 level, including languages, countries, classroom vocabulary, future plans, free time activities and illnesses.

The wording of the questions in both Items was straightforward and helpful to candidates. There was a range of questions that required:

♦ knowledge of more basic vocabulary, for example question 1(a) What does Luisa say about her mum? State any **one** thing, *mi madre es suiza y habla muchas lenguas….francés, italiano y alemán*
♦ detail, such as question 2(f) Francisco says the weather is nice. What would he rather be doing? State any **two** things, *me gustaría estar al aire libre para dar una vuelta en bici o entrenarme con mi club de natación*

The vast majority of candidates were able to access marks in the supported questions 1(g) and 2(b).

Component 2: Performance

For the majority of the performances that were verified by SQA, candidates' presentations were more confident than the conversations. Generally speaking, the standard of the presentations was high, with many candidates achieving 10 or 8 marks out of 10. Presentations were structured and flowed well with many candidates demonstrating a range of tenses.

The tasks set by centres were mainly of a nature that encouraged candidates to use detailed language as expected at National 5.

In terms of the Natural Element (5 marks in part of the conversation section) the majority of candidates scored well, achieving either 3 or 5 marks. Most candidates were awarded 5 marks, demonstrating their ability to sustain and maintain the conversations in a variety of ways.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

A large number of candidates coped well with this section, but there were some questions which some candidates found more challenging.

Text 1 question (c): 'How can you spend extra money? State two **things':** many candidates had difficulty translating and understanding *salir de juerga* and some opted to mistranslate as 'go out with friends' which is clearly not detailed enough and does not convey the same idea.

In question 1(d) **'What jobs do young people typically do? Give details of any** two**'** some candidates responded with 'work in a supermarket' which, although not totally incorrect, is not detailed enough to be awarded the mark (the correct response is 'stacking shelves in supermarket').

In 1(e) some candidates lost the mark because they had mistranslated *abuelo* as grandmother.

Finally, the overall purpose question (1g: **'What does the article say about part time jobs? Tick the correct box'**) caused some candidates difficulty as they may have thought that the details about jobs required for questions 1(d) and 1 (e) led to the statement in box A (the correct response was box B: Having a part-time job while studying is difficult for many young people).

Text 2 question (b): **'The museum is having a series of open days. What will people be able to visit? State** two **things'** some candidates did not receive the full mark available because they had mistranslated *esculturas* as 'culture'.

In question 2(c), **Dolores Rodríguez says the museum offers a large selection of art. According to Dolores, what will visitors think of it?**' the idea of *les va a apasionar* proved challenging to some candidates, who mistranslated it as 'it is exciting'.

The comparative in question 2(d) (**'What can people do during their visit? Complete the sentence'**) *artistas menos conocidas* was inaccessible to some candidates and they did not receive the mark.

In question 2(e) (ii) it was surprising to note that many candidates did not translate *pantallas táctiles* accurately, and indeed some chose to translate the expression as just 'screens' and therefore they lost the mark.

Text 3 question (a) '*sin prudencia*' caused some candidates to move too far away from the Spanish and take guesses such as 'recklessly' or 'dangerously'. Other candidates struggled to make their answer make sense in English and wrote answers such as 'without wisdom'.

In question 3 (b) (**'What is the purpose of facial recognition software in cars?'**) *seguridad* posed problems for a large number of candidates who had mis-translated the word as 'security'.

In question 3 (e) (**'How can the system warn drivers? Give two details**'), some candidates did not access the full range of marks because they had not provided enough detail in their answers (*hacer sonar una alarma cinco veces si está durmiendo)* or had mistranslated *hacer sonar una alarma* as sonar alarm.

In general, the key difference between the most successful and the least successful performances in Reading was that candidates who scored more marks understood the idea of the text as a whole and could follow the ideas or message of the text rather than concentrating on answering individual questions in isolation.

Writing

Candidates on the whole performed very well in this skill, and it was evident that the vast majority had been well prepared for the task. Where candidates had problems with accuracy, many had not concentrated on the main parts of the job application as per the task and had attempted to learn longer introductory and closing phrases. This had undoubtedly adversely affected their overall performance.

Accuracy remains the biggest issue for some candidates rather than content. 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 the three main factors affecting accuracy. There were examples of literal translations of '*application*' such as using the verb '*aplicar*'.

Listening

For some candidates, the particular challenges of this question paper were where there were no other alternative translations in English and therefore lack of knowledge of basic vocabulary contributed to candidates losing marks.

Questions that posed particular challenge to candidates included 1e, 2d and 2g in terms of gaps in vocabulary. For many of these questions there were simply no alternative words or phrases in English that would have been appropriate other than the one given in the marking instructions. In question 1(e) ('**Luisa went to summer camp last year. Where did she go?**') candidates were often unable to identify the country as 'Ireland' (instead answering Orlando, England, Atlanta, on the coast, in the east etc).

Question 1f ('**What does she want to do when she finishes her studies? State two things**') also proved particularly challenging for some candidates, not so much for a small gap in vocabulary but seemingly more due to the clarity (or lack of) of their response and for muddling the idea of 'international' with the separate point of 'travelling the world'.

In question 2(d) ('**How does he relax when he has a break?**') candidates did not cope well with *galletas* or *telenovela*. In question 2(g), ('**Francisco is anxious about his Maths exam. Why? State any two things**'), very few candidates correctly understood *no me siento muy bien. Me duele un poco la garganta.*

Component 2: Performance

While the candidates verified at National 5 scored well in the Natural Element aspect of the conversation, generally candidates found the conversation section more difficult. The majority of candidates scored either 9 or 12 marks, though some candidates did achieve 15 marks for the conversation. Such candidates could sustain the conversation by employing detailed language, could readily understand the assessor, and responded with detailed and accurate answers. Candidates achieving 9 or 12 could respond with limited detailed

language at times and/or with inaccuracies or hesitation that required prompting from the assessor. Pronunciation and grammatical accuracy was an issue for many of the candidates who performed less well.

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. These 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, such as idiomatic expressions (for example, *salir de juerga* (text 1); different tenses and forms of verbs (*van a clase dormidos* (text 1), rellenando una encuesta en la página web (text 2), *si está durmiendo* (text 3)); and detailed language under the broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture.

It is very good practice to train candidates to build in time to re-read their responses to check clear 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. Centres should ensure that candidates cover basic vocabulary such as food and drink, countries and nationalities and illnesses/body parts.

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 which allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs, persons of verbs and tenses. Moving away from listing of subjects for example and more fully developing the bullet point on school/college/education experience (for example by providing opinions, ideas) is good practice and allows for greater use of detailed language.

Candidates should be able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points.

Component 2: Performance

At times the choice of presentation or conversation topic meant that there was limited scope for the candidates to use detailed language, and this is something centres must take into

consideration and advise candidates accordingly. For example, as mentioned in the Key Messages report for Spanish, the topic of family should involve concepts beyond those such as family members and age, more detailed language and ideas can be elicited for example, if candidates are advised to talk about/are asked about relationships and reasons for the nature of such relationships.

It is worth noting that some of the conversations that are shorter than the recommended length do not allow the candidates to expand on ideas and demonstrate their abilities in a more extended way.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2923

Number of resulted entries in 2015	3968

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	59.1%	59.1%	2346	70
B	18.5%	77.6%	733	60
C	12.1%	89.7%	480	50
D	4.1%	93.8%	162	45
No award	6.2%	-	247	-

For this Course, the intention was to set an assessment with grade boundaries at the notional value of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. The examination provided an appropriate level of challenge to candidates. The variance in performance in the Overall Purpose question in the Reading component was counter-balanced by the level of challenge in the Course assessment overall. Therefore the grade boundaries were set as intended. The adjustment made for Listening in 2014 did not apply in 2015.