NQ Verification 2016–17 Key Messages Round 2

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	**Spanish**
Verification event/visiting information	**Event**
Date published:	**June 2017**

National Courses/Units verified:

H26V 74   National 4   Assignment (Added Value Unit)
C769 75   National 5   Performance–talking (IACCA*)
C769 76   Higher   Performance–talking (IACCA)

* Internally-assessed component of course assessment

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Added value unit

The approaches to assessment used by most centres selected for verification were 'accepted' or 'accepted with recommendations'.

Centres are reminded that the unit specification *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit* was updated (May 2015) and the original assessment standard 1.2 was replaced and is now the assessment standard relating to a candidate's presentation. Centres should therefore use the most up-to-date version of the unit assessment support pack on SQA Secure to avoid assessing candidates unnecessarily against the previous assessment standard 1.2 (selecting relevant information).

Centres used either translated versions of the texts available in the unit assessment support pack or centre-devised assessments to assess their candidates reflecting the approach to assessment set in the published added value unit assessment support pack. This allowed for personalisation and choice. On the whole, the tasks were appropriate, varied and on interesting topics.

Centres are reminded that the evidence required for assessment standards 1.2 and 1.3 is either an audio/video recording of a candidate's response or a detailed checklist of a candidate's response. The latter would include detail of a candidate's utterances in relation to both these assessment standards (relating to talking). Also, a detailed checklist would include for example reference to the candidate's use of verb forms, accuracy in verb endings, tenses (if appropriate), accuracy in adjectival agreement, accuracy of use of gender, the variety of pronouns, correct word order, level of hesitation, pronunciation and intonation etc. Centres may refer to the National 3 – Advanced Higher productive grammar grid (in the course and unit support notes at any level) if in doubt about aspects of talking on which they could provide detail.

National 5 and Higher performance–talking (IACCA)

All centres verified in round 2 used the SQA guidelines for the internally-assessed component of course assessment — National 5/Higher Modern Languages performance–talking assessment task.

Nominee verifiers noted that the quality of the performances sampled at both levels was generally very high. Assessors had guided candidates well in the selection of their topics and in many performances, these allowed candidates to employ a range of structures, vocabulary and tenses appropriate to each level.

Presentation section
Many presentations evidenced well-organised and relevant content and candidates were generally more accurate in this section. Centres should remind candidates to avoid listing (nouns in particular) at National 5 and Higher and should encourage candidates to take their time in the delivery of their presentation.

Conversation section
Assessors were very supportive of their candidates generally speaking and prompted their candidates at appropriate points during the conversation where hesitation occurred. Some performances were characterised by good use of interjections and connectives although centres could encourage candidates to employ a variety of interjections and ways of seeking clarification (in Spanish).

Open-ended questions were effective in eliciting detailed/detailed and complex language from candidates but the over-use of closed questions in some performances did not help candidates expand on their answers. Assessors should avoid the use of closed questions on a repeat basis.

Assessors should always give candidates appropriate thinking time in the conversation so that they can formulate their answers and, in some instances, correct themselves. A few conversations would have benefitted from less quick intervention from the assessor and centres are reminded that the assessor should not monopolise the conversation (cf the 'assessment conditions' section of *Modern Languages Performance–talking: General assessment information* at National 5 and Higher).

Candidates may use extended answers in places, but assessors are reminded to dissuade candidates from responding to questions with 'mini-presentations' or short monologues. Some such longer answers can appear to be very rehearsed and any sense of spontaneity in the conversation is lost. Ideally, a variety of shorter and longer responses should be employed in the conversation.

Centres are reminded to provide candidates with a variety of questions and to ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to cope with an element of unpredictability at both levels. Assessors should avoid the same conversation questions for all candidates as this may mean candidates do not use a wider variety in language resource. Where candidates select similar topics for the performance, centres should consider how to phrase conversation questions in a variety of ways or how to focus on different aspects of a same topic area with candidates.

Duration of the performance–talking
In relation to the guidelines for approach, centres are reminded to refer to the recommended duration of the talking performance as laid out in the SQA 'General Assessment Information' document at National 5 and Higher. Some performances were too long at National 5 and Higher and this was not necessarily to the benefit of candidates. Other performances were significantly shorter than the recommended duration and, at times, this meant that candidates did not always have the scope to demonstrate their abilities in using detailed/detailed and complex language and a wider variety of language structures. This was particularly the case in some conversations.

Centres are reminded that at Higher the conversation **must** develop into at least one other context. Occasionally, the second context was covered only briefly and this did not necessarily allow candidates to develop a range in language resource and to use different vocabulary and structures.

Assessment judgements

Added value unit
The majority of assessment judgements made by assessors in centres were 'accepted' as they were in line with national standards. Centres explained how they made their assessment judgements and gave good feedback to candidates, which is good practice.

Centres are reminded that where the conversation aspect is concerned (assessment standard 1.3), candidates should be able to use straightforward language with sufficient grammatical accuracy and a reasonable range of vocabulary as appropriate to National 4. Candidates should also have the opportunity for personalisation and choice in the topic and questions. They should be able to demonstrate that they can take the initiative and communicate with some success and cope reasonably well with unexpected questions accurately or more fluently but less accurately as described in the 'making assessment judgements' column of the judging evidence table for the added value unit.

National 5 and Higher performance–talking (IACCA)

The majority of centres were 'accepted' and applied the marking instructions for the talking performance reliably and in line with national standards. Some centres were too severe and some too lenient in their application of the marking instructions and centres are encouraged to make use of the Understanding Standards materials for National 5 and Higher Spanish talking performances (IACCA) published on the SQA secure website.

Some performances went beyond the standards expected at National 5 and Higher. Weaker performances highlighted problems with grammatical accuracy and problems with intonation and pronunciation.

Centres generally provided very useful commentaries in relation to how decisions regarding marks were reached and this was very useful to nominee verifiers.

Centres are reminded that performances may be uneven and to expect some variation in the quality of performance, even within each pegged mark in the marking instructions. All four performance aspects should be considered when marking the talking performance: content, accuracy, language resource and interaction (conversation only). Performances should be marked positively and holistically and do not have to be flawless to be awarded the highest marks. Assessors are reminded to refer to the general marking instructions along with the detailed marking instructions (pegged marks) within the 'General Assessment Information' document (at National 5 and Higher).

In general terms, the marking of the presentation section was more accurate and centres are encouraged, where required, to undertake professional dialogue in relation to deciding marks to award in the conversation section. This can be useful where a conversation (or a presentation, as required) is uneven in quality and may correspond to more than one pegged mark description.

For the most part, centres coped well with the application of the revised pegged marks for 'sustaining the conversation' (valid from session 2016–17). On some occasions, centres were too severe in the application of the marking instructions in relation to 'sustaining the conversation' and at Higher level in particular. It is worthwhile highlighting that candidates do not have to ask questions and may demonstrate the ability to recover from hesitation, for example, and still achieve full marks in this section.

03 ▶ Section 3: General comments

Added value unit

For the assessment of talking in the added value unit (assessment standards 1.2 and 1.3), there is no requirement to submit an audio recording of a candidate's work. However, audio recordings do allow verifiers to provide more detailed and useful feedback to centres.

Commentaries on the candidate assessment record (or equivalent document) are useful for internal and external verification purposes. As above, centres are reminded that if using a detailed checklist for assessing talking they should provide some examples of what each candidate says and how they demonstrated use of straightforward language with reference to the productive grammar grid. The use of centre-devised lists or tables is acceptable in order to relay this information. The candidate assessment record format available in the National 4 added value unit assessment support pack does not have to be used to relay information against assessment standards 1.2 and 1.3.

In relation to assessment standard 1.3 specifically, centres should also employ a range of open-ended questions to allow candidates to demonstrate that they can handle straightforward language and use a reasonable range of vocabulary appropriate to National 4.

With regards to assessing understanding of straightforward written texts, if a centre is using one of the reading texts in the added value unit as 'dual purpose' to overtake all or part of the Understanding Language unit at National 4, it would be useful if the centre could state this on the reading text. This would avoid any confusion in the process of external verification between assessment standards 1.2, both of which are referenced in the added value unit and the Understanding Language unit for different purposes, respectively: 'Giving an oral presentation in the modern language on the topic investigated' and; 'Applying knowledge of the modern language'.

Nominee verifiers of the added value unit only require to verify the assessment standard 1.2 which relates to evidence for the oral presentation given by the candidate.

National 5 and Higher performance–talking

Personalisation and choice should ensure that candidates select a topic/topics of their choice for their presentation and conversation. Assessors should support and advise candidates in their choice of topic(s) from within the contexts available in the Modern Languages course (at both levels). Candidates can talk about different aspects of one or more topic(s) developed from at least one context (at least two at Higher).

Pronunciation and intonation continue to be something nominee verifiers comment on. These can detract from the overall impression in some performances and can affect the level of accuracy in delivery. This should be an area for continued focus in learning and teaching.

Recordings

Centres are reminded that they must ensure all recordings are audible and playable on a variety of devices (and not solely the type of device used to make the recording). Some recordings were not immediately playable and were characterised by background noise.

Marks

It was encouraging to note all centres provided a breakdown of marks and centres are reminded to provide a total for the talking performance for every candidate on the Verification Sample Form.

The majority of centres produced sample materials which were well organised and showed evidence of internal verification. It is always useful in the external verification process when centres include detail (eg on the candidate assessment record or equivalent) of the reasons why a candidate was awarded one pegged mark rather than another for any section of the talking performance.