Course report 2026

Advanced Higher Spanish, SCQF level 7

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question papers and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

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Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 424

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 483

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	190	39.3	39.3	144
B	114	23.6	62.9	123
C	91	18.8	81.8	102
D	65	13.5	95.2	81
No award	23	4.8	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find statistical reports on our website.

General commentary on grade boundaries

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

- For most National Courses, we aim 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's very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do

this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy.

How the course assessment performed

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation question paper performed as intended. The topic of the paper was on people's views on democracy and citizenship education in Peru. Most candidates engaged well with the topic.

Most candidates attempted most or all questions in the paper.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening paper performed as intended. The paper was on the context of society, with a focus on young people's use of technology. Candidates engaged well with the topic, and most were able to attempt all questions.

There was equal choice of all four essay titles.

Portfolio

The portfolio performed as expected. It provided candidates opportunities to show their critical and analytical skills in their choice of literature or media. No candidates chose language in work.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected. The performance allows candidates to demonstrate their ability to sustain a conversation with a visiting assessor. When candidates completed their Subject Topic List (STL) form in line with our guidance, visiting assessors could use this to provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their conversational skills and ability to manipulate the language to express ideas on their topics.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Most candidates performed well in this paper, especially in the comprehension questions 1 to 6, where they gave enough detail to gain the marks:

- question 1: most candidates identified that schools were ‘hierarchical institutions with not much space for debate or discussion of ideas’ (*las escuelas eran instituciones jerárquicas, sin mucho espacio para el debate de ideas*) and that they were ‘a place where participation in decision making was not encouraged’ (*no se fomentaba la participación en la toma de decisions*)
- question 2(a): most candidates identified that democracy means that ‘the rights of citizens are respected’ (*se respeten los derechos de todos los ciudadanos*) and implies that ‘all people have the same social and economic opportunities’ (*todas las personas tengan las mismas oportunidades sociales y económicas*)
- question 3(a): most candidates understood that a good citizen is someone who ‘shows respect for the authorities’ (*demuestra respeto por las autoridades*), who ‘always obey the laws and rules of society’ (*obedece siempre las leyes y las normas de la sociedad*), who ‘respects the opinions of others, even when they are different’ (*respeta las opiniones de las demás personas, aun cuando sean diferentes de las suyas*) and who ‘knows the history of Peru’ (*conoce la historia del Perú*)
- question 5(a): most candidates stated ‘observatory of forest biodiversity and (the associated) environmental challenges, dangers’ (*observatorio de la biodiversidad forestal y de los desafíos ambientales*)
- question 6, offered optionality: most candidates gained the mark for either ‘our young people are revolutionising the system’ (*nuestros jóvenes están revolucionando el sistema*) or ‘young people have an influence on government and environmental projects which positively affect Peru’ (*los jóvenes tienen influencia en proyectos de gobernanza y del medio ambiente que afectan positivamente al Perú*)

- question 7 (the overall purpose question): most candidates stated the writer's overall purpose, which was to inform the reader about what citizenship and democracy education is like in Peru and how it has been developed in a positive way. Many candidates used appropriate inferencing skills to justify their answer
- candidates who gained higher marks:
    - had a deeper understanding of the text as a whole and approached the question in an analytical and critical way
    - stated the overall purpose and then went on to analyse the stylistic techniques used and could outline the ways in which these substantiate their argument and the impact they made on the reader
    - when referring to word choice, they analysed the ways in which this backed up the overall purpose of the text
    - linked references to the text to their answer and did not translate from Spanish
    - structured their justifications well, and related their answer to the text
- question 8 (the translation): many candidates accurately translated verb tenses and verb forms, as well as idiomatic phrases:
    - sense unit 4: many translated se menciona escasamente as 'it is hardly mentioned'
    - sense unit 5: some translated *llama la atención* as 'it is striking that'

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section: most candidates coped well with items 1 and 2, and engaged well with the topic of technology:

- question 1(b), offered optionality: most candidates identified either 'more than 3 hours' (*más de tres horas*) or 'more than double the recommended amount' (*más del doble de lo recomendado*) and gained the mark
- question 1(d), offered optionality: most candidates gained the marks from 'sleeping the recommended 8 hours' (*las ocho horas recomendadas*), 'doing 30 minutes physical exercise' (*30 minutos de actividad física*), or 'reading books' (*leen libros*)
- question 2(c)(i): most candidates identified 'young people fall into the habit of spending hours obsessively on their phones' (*algunos jóvenes caen en el hábito*

de pasar horas navegando obsesivamente en sus móviles), 'they watch silly video clips' (*viendo clips sobre tonterías*), and 'they lose track of time' (*pierden la noción del tiempo*)

- question 2(c)(ii): most candidates stated 'the negative impact that can affect emotional and physical wellbeing' (*impacto negativo que puede afectar a su bienestar emocional y físico*) and 'they have a greater feeling of loneliness' (*una mayor sensación de soledad*)
- question 2(d)(ii): most candidates identified 'find it hard to concentrate in class' (*cueste concentrarse en clase*) and gained the mark
- question 2(d)(iii): most candidates identified both 'establish healthy limits' (*establecer límites saludables*) and 'encourage face to face interactions' (fomentar la interacción cara a cara) and gained both marks
- question 2(e), offered optionality: most candidates stated either 'in a language classroom, pupils have access to fantastic opportunities' (*en una clase de idiomas, los alumnos tienen acceso a unas oportunidades fantásticas*) or 'you can read today's news in another language' (*pueden leer artículos de periódico de ese mismo día en otro idioma*)

In the discursive writing section, where candidates' essays gained high marks they:

- had a good structure, introduction and a conclusion that were relevant to the title
- used paragraphs to address different aspects of the topic
- adapted learned material and had content that was relevant to the title
- used language appropriate to Advanced Higher level, including idiomatic expressions
- gave comprehensive arguments with no repetition
- fully addressed the titles in an objective and balanced way using interesting ideas
- incorporated discursive phrases into their essays, such as *por una parte… por otra parte…* (on the one hand… on the other hand…), *cabe destacar que…* (it should be noted that…), *en resumen…* (to sum up…)

Portfolio

Candidates used a good selection of sources. Candidates who performed well in the portfolio chose a question that led to critical analysis and provided several considered examples to back up their position. These candidates proofread their submissions and took an analytical and/or critical approach, with reasoned and relevant arguments.

- candidates used a variety of texts, including and some contemporary literature
- where candidates' essays gained high marks they:
    - had a concise question that allowed them to adopt an analytical approach or had a title that allowed them to develop two sides of an argument
    - explored specific themes or linguistic features, for example imagery or symbolism in a piece of literature
    - used quotations that were relevant to the title and were analysed rather than explained
    - had a good structure, with one idea or theme being discussed in each paragraph and linking these ideas back to the title
    - had a concise introduction, which did not give the conclusion away at the beginning
    - used a formal register avoiding personal opinions
    - referred to their chosen text and additional sources, with relevant evidence and quotations rather than making generalised statements that were not relevant
    - had reliable bibliographies with at least two sources in Spanish

Performance–talking

Many candidates prepared well and incorporated learned material skilfully. Many candidates engaged and interacted meaningfully with the interlocutor, which led to some very good performances.

Candidates who accessed the upper range of marks:

- completed the Subject Topic List (STL) form well, and included clear starting points for discussion that allowed the visiting assessors to broaden the conversation beyond the topics listed, ensuring the speaking assessment was both flexible and purposeful
- were well prepared, confident and could speak about engaging topics at length
- spoke well about their chosen text for their portfolio
- went beyond minimal responses, had a good level of fluency and had interesting and mature opinions on their chosen topics
- incorporated learned material as well as responding with confidence to unexpected questions
- demonstrated high levels of accuracy, complex and sophisticated language and the ability to offer mature and well-developed opinions
- had good pronunciation and intonation

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

In the comprehension questions, some candidates misused the dictionary, had difficulty with expression in English, misunderstood qualifiers and had a lack of detail in their answers, and missed out on marks:

- question 1(a): some candidates misunderstood *instituciones* (institutions) as 'institutes'
- question 1(b): some candidates misunderstood *la democracia y la ciudadanía se han vuelto parte de lo que se enseña en las escuelas* (democracy and citizenship have become part of what they teach in schools) as 'have changed', 'have turned into', or 'have returned to be taught in schools'
- question 2(b): some candidates misunderstood *gobernantes* (leaders) as 'governants' or 'governing'
- question 3(b): some candidates wrote 'debts' instead of 'taxes' for *impuestos*
- question 4(c): some candidates misunderstood the verb in *la democracia y la ciudadanía deban enseñarse como parte integral del currículo de estudios en todas las escuelas peruanas* (democracy and citizenship should be an integral part of the curriculum in all Peruvian schools) and wrote 'integrated into' or 'should teach you how to'
- question 4(c): some candidates mistook *muchos aprendizajes competenciales* (many learning skills) for 'learning competencies' or 'apprenticeships'
- question 5(b): some candidates wrote 'spaces of plants and animals' for *especies de plantas y animals* (species of plants and animals)
- question 6: some candidates wrote 'changing' instead of 'revolutionising' for *están revolucionando el Sistema* (revolutionising the system)
- in question 7 (the overall purpose question):
    - most candidates identified the overall purpose of the text, but some did not write an inferential response
    - many candidates repeated comprehension answers or quoted from the text without analysing the impact of the language techniques used on the overall purpose
    - some answers were overly long and repetitive

- in question 8 (the translation):
  - some candidates missed out words, did not use the correct verb tenses or verb forms and did not proofread their response to ensure that the translation made sense
  - sense unit 1: *La noción de democracia es mucho más que demandar derechos* (the notion, idea of democracy is much more than demanding for rights) – some candidates wrote 'the democracy notion', 'the understanding of' or 'there are a lot more demands'
  - sense unit 2: *y debería incluir la responsabilidad de influir sobre las acciones del gobierno* (should include the responsibility for influencing over the actions of the government) – some candidates wrote 'the responsibility of influence for' or 'should have to include'
  - sense unit 3: *Sorprendentemente, el derecho de debatir las decisiones que nos afectan* (Surprisingly, the right to debate decisions which affect us) – some candidates mistranslated nos as 'we' or 'they'
  - sense unit 6: *la democracia y la escuela sean muy similares* (democracy and schools are very similar) – some candidates wrote the verb in the future tense in English (will be very similar)
  - sense unit 9: *En este contexto, la educación vuelve a ser crucial para reforzar* (In this context, education becomes crucial again in reinforcing) – some candidates mistranslated *vuelve a ser* (becomes again) as 'returns to be', 'comes to be' or 'turns to be'

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, some candidates mistranslated numbers, missed qualifiers and adverbs and had a lack of detail and missed out on marks:

- question 1(a): some did not identify *cada vez más tiempo* as 'more and more time'
- question 1(c): some incorrectly identified *influencers* (influencers) as 'celebrities'
- question 1(e): some mistook *formación* (training, guidance) for 'formation'
- question 1(f): some wrote 'law' instead of 'policy' for *una política*
- question 2(a): some wrote 'children' instead of 'young people' for *jóvenes*, and 'technology' instead of 'mobiles' for *móviles*
- question 2(b): some misunderstood *la conciencia social* and wrote 'social conscience' instead of 'social awareness', and some mistook *informarse* for 'inform' instead of 'find out'
- question 2(d)(i): some wrote 'it is the only way to have fun' for *solo es una manera de divertirse* (it's just a way to have fun)
- question 2(f): some mistook *aplicaciones educativas* (educational apps) for 'games' and *la autoestima* (self-esteem) for 'self-confidence'

In the discursive writing section:

- a few used prepared material that was not fully relevant to the essay titles
- candidates who relied on prepared material tended to produce less accurate language when attempting to express ideas beyond what they have memorised or to repeat the same ideas
- some wrote a mainly personalised response to the essay titles
- some made errors with common language and grammar:
    - adjectival agreements, use of infinitives, conjugation of verbs or tenses
    - unidiomatic translation from English into Spanish
    - the incorrect use of *ser* and *estar, para* and *por*
    - missed opportunities to use the subjunctive
    - misused the dictionary

Portfolio

- many candidates chose a title that was overly complex or too vague, which did not allow a focused critical analysis
- some candidates' essays attempted to link two unrelated pieces of literature, and did not have a clear focus
- inappropriate register had a negative effect on some essays, and some candidates had difficulty with expression in English
- some candidates did not proofread their essays, which led to errors in syntax, punctuation and spelling
- many candidates repeated one or two ideas throughout their essays, did not use enough quotations and did not analyse the quotations. This often led to a superficial analysis of their chosen texts or films
- many essays lacked analysis or critical terminology
- some retold the story or plot without evaluating themes or literary techniques
- in some essays, candidates made unsubstantiated assertions with no reference to the area of study
- a few did not refer to at least two sources in Spanish in their bibliography

Performance–talking

Some candidates' Subject Topic List (STL) forms did not contain enough detail for the chosen contexts, while others were overly prescriptive (for example a list of questions, or very narrow and specific topics). This led to some candidates not performing well, as they either could not talk in some detail or could not express ideas and opinions on more general themes within the context.

- a few candidates had difficulty in sustaining the discussion beyond what they had learned and did not have the techniques to cope with unexpected questions
- a few candidates had difficulty with accuracy in verbs and verb endings, tenses, the gender of nouns, appropriate use of the infinitive and adjectival agreement
- candidates who chose to discuss, for example future plans, a gap year or the importance of learning languages found it challenging to incorporate the use of complex and sophisticated language into the conversation, to offer mature and sophisticated opinions or to sustain the discussion at the level required

Preparing candidates for assessment

You should ensure candidates:

- refer to all criteria, detailed marking instructions, pegged marks and performance descriptors
- refer to our Understanding Standards web page
- make full use of the Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page, including course reports, marking instructions for Advanced Higher Spanish, and past papers
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper: Reading and Translation

You should ensure candidates:

- practise working within the time constraints for the paper
- allocate an appropriate amount of time to the comprehension questions, the overall purpose question, and the translation
- provide detailed answers to the comprehension questions and look out for qualifiers, comparatives and superlatives
- check the number of marks being awarded for each question, to guide them towards the amount of information they have to provide
- look for the key words in the questions and in the Spanish text
- pay particular attention to their expression in English
- explore all meanings of the word they are looking up when using a dictionary, to ensure they choose the one which best fits the context of their answer
- pay close attention to verb tenses and forms in the translation and read this section over to make sure it makes sense on a holistic level

For the overall purpose question, you should ensure candidates:

- draw inferences from the text and not only provide factual information or repeat the answers to their comprehension questions
- know that they must examine the impact of the writer's techniques and word choice and not simply state what they are

- do not only translate quotes from the text
- are aware a concise answer using inferential-type language is more likely to achieve a higher mark than a long response that only provides information from the text or repeats the same points in different ways
- look at the title of the article, how the text begins and ends, the structure of the text, any reference to statistics, quotations from experts, the use of questions and/or rhetorical questions, lists of words, instances of emotive language
- examine the impact of techniques such as these in relation to how the writer develops their argument. For example, is the writer optimistic, positive, in favour of what is being discussed in the article? Or are they pessimistic, negative, against the theme of the text? If the text allows for a balance of arguments, this should be incorporated into the answer
- refer to the examples on the Understanding Standards website as a means of discussing and reviewing the format, formula, type of language required to answer this question

For the translation, you should ensure candidates:

- practise developing translation skills, in particular, ways of converting idiomatic expressions from Spanish into English
- can recognise and accurately translate tenses and verb forms
- develop their dictionary skills, and are aware they should consider not just the first meaning they find, but all meanings of the word or phrase to ensure they choose the one which best fits the context of their translation
- read and review their translation to ensure it makes sense and reads well in English
- make sure they do not miss out words

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, you should ensure candidates:

- provide full and detailed answers
- continue to revise basic language and vocabulary
- pay particular attention to qualifiers and numbers
- read the questions carefully before the recording begins to anticipate the type of language they can expect to hear
- practise strategies for note-taking while listening
- regularly use Spanish in class to develop listening skills

In the discursive writing section, you should ensure candidates:

- develop the grammatical accuracy required at this level
- refer to the productive grammar grid in our Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification to ensure they cover all relevant areas of grammar
- use complex and sophisticated and, if possible, idiomatic language appropriately
- address all aspects of the essay question in a relevant and balanced way
- have a focused approach, including an introduction and a conclusion, and refer to the essay stimulus
- build up banks of phrases for use in their essays, including phrases associated with linguistic signposting, linking structures and opinion phrases
- set aside some time during the exam to proofread their essay, checking spelling, verb endings and accents
- are familiar with the dictionary they will use in the exam

Portfolio

You should ensure candidates:

- know the choice of title is very important, and it should be concise, and allow for an analytical approach
- use a variety of critical terminology
- use appropriate register and an objective tone
- choose a suitable secondary source in Spanish that relates to the primary source. This could be a piece of literary criticism, a second poem, an online article
- include a critical evaluation of the primary source
- in relation to poetry:
    - analyse one poem at a time focusing on each theme in turn before moving on to the next one
- check the factual accuracy of any statements they make
- practise writing effective introductions that do not reveal the conclusion before they have presented their analysis
- include a wide number of quotations in Spanish to support their analysis: they should analyse these quotes and not translate them into English
- develop the quality of their bibliography to show a depth of research
- refer to at least two sources in Spanish in their bibliography
- proofread their use of English spelling and punctuation as well as accuracy in quotation from literary texts

Performance–talking

You should ensure candidates:

- choose topics that allow for mature, sophisticated and in-depth discussion
- include learned materials as a strategy to build confidence in offering information and opinions on chosen topics and be prepared to deal with unexpected questions
- read the detailed marking instructions so they are familiar with what is expected for the higher pegged marks
- focus on grammatical accuracy, particularly on the use of verb tenses (especially the preterite and the perfect), the gender of nouns, adjectival agreements, and the use of *ser* and *estar*, *para* and *por*, and the subjunctive
- develop a bank of phrases for use in their performance–talking in relation to discussion techniques in the language, which would help them deal with unexpected questions
- prepare thoroughly for the performance–talking by regularly practising discussing their chosen topics
- fill in the STL form in a comprehensive way, by identifying topics and sub-topics they would like to discuss. They should not include a list of questions they would like to be asked but should give enough detail about the main themes they want to discuss