Course report 2026

National 5 Spanish, SCQF level 5

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.

We carried out limited verification for performance–talking this year, so we won't publish a verification summary. You can find summaries from previous years on our website.

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Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 6,782

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 7,052

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	4,146	58.8	58.8	84
B	1,067	15.1	73.9	72
C	875	12.4	86.3	60
D	563	8.0	94.3	48
No award	401	5.7	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 1: Reading

The reading question paper performed as intended. The paper included a range of topics across the three texts. It covered the contexts of employability (text 1, becoming a dog walker), society (text 2, the importance of eating vegetables) and culture (text 3, the writer Isabel Allende). The topics were relevant, and the vocabulary and grammar assessed were in line with the National 5 course specification. There were questions of high, average and lower demand across the three texts. There were few no responses to questions.

The questions were accessible to candidates, allowing them to locate the answers in the text. The supported questions worked well, particularly questions 1(d) and 2(a).

Question paper 1: Writing

The writing paper performed as intended. In this paper, which is always on the context of employability, candidates reply by email to a job advert (for a cashier in a supermarket). Candidates address four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points (‘why you want this job’ and ‘when you can start’). Both unpredictable bullet points were relevant to the job advert and accessible for candidates.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening paper performed as intended. The paper had a good level of challenge and demand in terms of the content and questions. The topics were familiar and there was a range of vocabulary across the two items. The paper covered the context of learning. After each item, candidates answer questions in English. The content and questions were accessible for candidates.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as expected.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper 1: Reading

Many candidates performed well across all three texts, demonstrating good reading skills and achieving a good distribution of marks. Most completed the paper in the allocated time and provided detail in their answers using qualifiers, adjectives and adverbs.

- question 1(a): most candidates understood *estar en buena forma física* (to be in good shape)
- question 1(c)(i): most candidates understood *tu familia y a tus amigos* (your family and your friends) and gained the mark
- question 2(a): most candidates identified *equilibrada* (balanced) and gained the mark
- question 2(b)(ii): most candidates provided the detail required in *nos da más energía* (gives us more energy), *nos ayuda a dormir bien* (helps us sleep better) and *mejora la piel* (improves the skin)
- question 2(d): most candidates understood *pela las patatas* (peels the potatoes), *corta las zanahorias* (cuts the carrots) and *responsable para la parrilla* (responsible for the grill)
- question 3(a): most candidates understood *periodista* (journalist)

Question paper 1: Writing

- many candidates addressed the first four bullet points and the two unpredictable bullet points very well
- many candidates used detailed language, a range of structures and wrote accurately
- many candidates used conjunctions and adjectival agreement accurately, as well as a range of tenses and vocabulary structures
- most candidates wrote a well-structured email, which was relevant to the job advert, containing language and structures appropriate to the level

- there was little evidence of long lists of nouns and repetition, and many candidates produced a varied and succinct piece of writing
- some candidates used a range of language and structures in bullet points 1 to 4
- some candidates included detailed and complex language and structures more appropriate to Higher, but this is not required to achieve full marks at this level
- in bullet point 5 (why you want this job):
    - many candidates used *porque* (because) with a reason, for example *porque me gusta la cultura* (because I like the culture)
    - some candidates used the structure *para* (in order to) followed by a purpose in the infinitive form, for example, *para mejorar mi español* (to improve my Spanish)
- in bullet point 6 (when you can start):
    - most candidates used the structure *puedo* (I can) or *me gustaría* (I would like to) followed by *empezar* or *comenzar* (start) and a time phrase, such as *en julio* (in July)

Question paper 2: Listening

Most candidates coped well with the vocabulary in the context of learning.

- question 1(a): many candidates identified the nouns and adjectives in *en un pueblo pequeño* (in a small village or town) and *muchos buenos amigos* (lots of good friends)
- question 1(b), offered optionality: most candidates identified either *mi madre encontró un trabajo diferente* (mum got a different job), or *como ingeniera* (as an engineer) or *en una compañía internacional* (in an international company)
- question 1(d), offered optionality: most candidates identified one mode of transport from *voy en metro* (by underground) or *mi padre me lleva en coche cuando va al trabajo* (lift from his dad, dad's car, dad drives him, or dad takes him on his way to work)
- question 2(a): most candidates identified biology (*biología*)
- question 2(b): most candidates identified the phrases *muy prácticos* (very practical) and *muchos experimentos* (lots of experiments)
- question 2(c): many candidates identified the detail in the phrase *me ayudan mucho* (they help me a lot)

- question 2(e)(i): most candidates identified the information *con mis abuelos* (with my grandparents) and *un piso en el centro* (a flat in the centre)
- question 2(f)(ii): most candidates identified the verb phrases *hablar con turistas de otros países* (talk to tourists from other countries) and *practicar mi inglés* (practise my English)
- 2(g): most candidates identified the jobs *ingeniera* (engineer) and *técnica de laboratorio* (lab technician)

Assignment–writing

- most candidates produced very good pieces of writing and engaged meaningfully with the task, and gained the upper marks of 12, 16 or 20
- candidates covered a range of topics from the contexts of society, learning, culture, for example family, home area, healthy living, ICT, school, holidays, media, environment and film
- most candidates used detailed language appropriate to the level, with some very good examples of detailed and complex language and structures that were more appropriate to Higher. However, this is not required to achieve full marks at this level
- most candidates showed high levels of accuracy
- most candidates' writing was clear and legible, and most ticked the relevant box in the answer booklet for their chosen context and included a title in English
- most candidates structured their essays well and used a range of vocabulary, including time phrases and a variety of tenses
- most candidates expressed both positive and negative ideas and opinions and many gave reasons for these

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper 1: Reading

Some candidates did not provide required qualifiers or give enough detail and missed out on marks.

Text 1

- question 1(b)(ii): some candidates omitted the word ‘dogs’ (*perros*)
- question 1(c)(iii): some candidates misunderstood *perfil profesional* (professional profile) as ‘personal profile’ and *crear* (create) as ‘have’

Text 2

- question 2(c): some candidates misunderstood *aprecian* (appreciate) as ‘evaluate’ or ‘consider’, and a few misunderstood *distintos* (different) as ‘several’
- question 2(e): *apoya la economía regional* (supports the regional economy). A few candidates had difficulty with word order and misunderstood this as ‘supports the economic or economical region’

Text 3

- question 3(b): many candidates misunderstood *ochenta millones* (80 million) as 8 million or 8 thousand, or *más exitosa* (most successful) as ‘very successful’ or ‘more successful’
- question 3(c): many candidates misunderstood *historias* (stories) as ‘histories’ or *emocionanates* (exciting) as ‘emotional’
- question 3(d): many candidates did not give enough detail from *mucha influencia en los temas de sus novelas* (big influence on the themes of her novels)
- question 3(e)(ii): some candidates did not give enough detail from *a mezcla de misterio, suspense y magia* (the mix of mystery, suspense and magic)
- question 3(e)(iii):
    - some misunderstood *la naturaleza* (nature) as ‘the environment’ or ‘the earth’
    - a few omitted the word ‘importance’ (*la importancia*)
    - some had difficulty understanding *llevarse bien con* (get on well with)

Question paper 1: Writing

- a few candidates found the task demanding and were not prepared for the predictable bullet points
- in bullet point 5 (why you want this job): some candidates did not conjugate the verb *querer* (to want)
- in bullet point 6 (when you can start):
    - a few candidates had difficulty with *estoy disponible* (I am available) and used the verb 'to be' (ser)
    - some candidates did not correctly use the modal verbs *poder* (to be able to) or *querer* (to want to)
    - some candidates did not use the infinitive 'to start' (*comenzar or empezar*) after the modal verb and instead used the noun 'start' (*principio*)
- some candidates had difficulty with accuracy in the predictable and unpredictable bullet points, particularly accuracy with verbs
- poor dictionary use, L1 and/or other language interference, and literal translations of idiomatic phrases were the three main factors affecting accuracy
- some candidates had poor spelling, particularly when writing vowels
- some candidates omitted essential accents, or added unnecessary accents
- there were instances of incorrect spelling of high frequency words, for example *Escocia* (Scotland), *me llamo* (I am called) and *español* (Spanish)
- some candidates wrongly used infinitives when conjugating verbs in the first-person present tense
- when creating an accurate sentence using *me gusta* (I like), some candidates omitted the article, for example *me gustan los idiomas* (I like languages)
- a few candidates did not attempt either or both unpredictable bullet points
- a few candidates produced a long piece of writing, which led to a lack of accuracy, and others wrote a few lines that were accurate, but did not provide enough detail

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1(a): some candidates omitted ‘small’ (*pequeño*) or ‘good’ (*buenos*) and did not gain the marks
- question 1(c): some candidates interpreted *más grande* as ‘big’, instead of the comparative ‘bigger’ and did not gain the mark. Some candidates did not understand *ochocientos* (800)
- question 1(f): many candidates omitted the word ‘quite’ (*bastante*), misinterpreted *viajar* (to travel) as 'visit’ or ‘go’ and/or did not understand *los Estados Unidos* (USA) and missed out on marks
- question 2(c): some candidates did not understand the phrases *no tengo rutina diaria* (I have no daily routine), *me falta motivación* (I lack motiviation) and *voy a la playa* (I go to the beach)
- question 2(d): some candidates mistinterpreted *una gran variedad de museos* (a variety of museums) as 'lots of museums’, and a few candidates responded with ‘great tapas’, instead of ‘great nightlife’ (*una vida nocturna genial*) or ‘tapas bars’ (*bares de tapas*) and missed out on marks
- question 2(f)(i): most candidates did not identify ‘gift shop’ (*tienda de regalos*)
- there were instances of incorrect spelling and expression in English

Assignment–writing

- some candidates were repetitive in their use of expression or included a number of lists, which led to language that did not have enough detail to access the upper marks of 16 or 20
- some candidates had difficulty with adjectival agreement, gender, verb endings, tenses and/or spelling
- a few candidates missed out key words
- some candidates did not use the correct punctuation and/or accents
- some candidates misused the dictionary and gave literal translation
- a few candidates mixed up the adverb *bien* (well) and the adjective *buen, bueno, buena* (good)
- some candidates did not maintain high levels of accuracy or use a range of detailed language, which was sometimes as they went beyond the recommended word length of 120 to 200 words
- some candidates did not go into enough depth in their chosen topic and then discussed another topic that was not relevant to their title
- some candidates did not include a range of opinions and ideas, and did not gain the higher marks
- a few candidates wrote the title in Spanish, or did not include a title
- a few pieces of writing did not relate to the title

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

You should ensure candidates:

- know the structures, grammar, and detailed language appropriate for this level
- have a good knowledge of verb conjugation, adjective endings, and the comparative. This minimises mistranslation if using a dictionary for comprehension
- know that if qualifiers are in the text, they should appear in the answer
- refer to the marking instructions on our website, so that they're fully aware of the level of detail required for the question papers
- indicate on their answer booklet if they are using the additional pages to write answers, for example by using an asterisk (*)
- regularly practise answering exam-type questions with a similar structure and standard to the course assessment
- use the dictionary carefully and do not always choose the first definition listed
- immediately write down the word and/or phrase they look up in the dictionary on their paper
- are aware of common 'false friends' and encourage them to check these carefully in the dictionary
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper 1: Writing

As the writing is in the form of an email, there is no requirement for candidates to use formal beginning and endings. Many candidates who include formal beginnings and endings often make errors in these.

You should ensure candidates:

- develop ways of addressing the first four predictable bullet points that allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, and apply knowledge of verbs and tenses
- can provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points, and ensure this contains a verb
- practise manipulating the language in a range of unfamiliar bullet points
- avoid lists, particularly when describing school subjects in bullet point 2
- accurately use the infinitive after certain verb phrases, for example *me gusta* (I like), *puedo* (I can), *quier*o (I want) and *para* (in order to)
- set aside time in the exam to read over their writing, and use a dictionary to check spelling and accents
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper 2: Listening

You should ensure candidates:

- are familiar with a range of common vocabulary from the four contexts of society, learning, employability, culture
- have knowledge of words and phrases, including a range of adjectives, tenses and verb forms
- regularly listen to Spanish that is relevant to the exam, such as short monologues and conversations
- pay attention to detail, and make sure they are familiar with qualifiers, for example *muy* (very), *mucho* (lots of) and *bastante* (quite) and comparatives, for example *más* (more) and *menos* (less) so they can include this detail in their answers

- practise common verbs, for example *encontrar* (to find), *pagar* (to pay), *trabajar* (to work) and *viaj*ar (to travel) and common nouns, such as *el pueblo* (the village or town), *el edificio* (the building), *los países* (the countries) and *la playa* (the beach)
- are familiar with modal verbs, for example *puedo* (I can) and *tengo que* (I must), as well as their negative forms

Assignment–writing

You should ensure candidates:

- focus on one of the contexts and a specific topic
- include a range of ideas and opinions with reasons, and do not write long lists of nouns and verbs
- write in an organised and structured way
- include paragraphs, and make sure the title (in English) relates to the content
- include an introduction and conclusion
- include a good degree of grammatical accuracy using detailed language throughout
- include conjunctions where appropriate, a range of verbs, verb forms and some tenses
- link ideas and paragraphs to produce a coherent piece of writing
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- proofread their work carefully, using a dictionary where appropriate to check the accuracy of spelling and vocabulary
- avoid exceeding the recommended word length
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

You should use our writing improvement code, or equivalent, when reviewing candidates initial draft, and have follow-up conversations with candidates.