



Course Report 2016

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

It was pleasing to note again that in Spanish National 5 candidates this year performed well across all three sections of the question papers: in Reading, Writing and Listening. Markers reported that there were few poor performances, and that the vast majority of candidates had accessed the question papers well. The question papers covered a range of topics, and across all aspects had an appropriate level of challenge and demand for National 5 level.

As indicated in the Course Assessment Specification for National 5 Modern Languages, the content of the Course Assessment covered all four contexts (society, learning, employability and culture). Markers noted that the papers and marking instructions were very fair and easy to apply.

In **Reading**, candidates read three texts of approximately 150–200 words in Spanish and answered in English the questions that followed each text. The three texts in this year's paper covered the contexts of culture (text 1 – beach clean-up), learning (text 2 – International Girls' Day) and employability (text 3 – working from home). The overall purpose question this year, the question which assesses the candidates' ability to understand the overall purpose of a text, was in text 3.

In **Writing**, candidates read a job advert in Spanish and responded to a task with six bullet points, of which the first four were: name, age and where you live, school/college/education experience until now, skills/interests you have which make you right for the job, and related work experience. The last two, the two unpredictable bullet points, were: when you are available to work in the summer, and future career plans. 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 Gabriela spoke about reading. In Item 2 candidates listened to Ana talking to Javi about the International Music Festival of Benicàssim. After each item, candidates answered questions in English. At the end of Item 1, the monologue, candidates answered the overall purpose question.

Component 3: performance: Talking

The course component performed as expected. Assessors are familiar with the aim of the performance task and they encouraged candidates to use topics and contexts which allowed candidates to perform well. The task gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use detailed spoken language.

The revised detailed marking instructions allowed centres to mark candidates' performances with increased confidence. The majority of centres therefore were able to mark candidates' performances in line with national standards.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question Paper 1: Reading and Writing

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 were able to engage well with the texts, which covered relevant topics, 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 tackled well by many candidates.

Insufficient detail and inaccurate translation in a response were major factors 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 3 question e).

In **Writing**, markers this year commented on the fact that many candidates had addressed all the bullet points fully. There were many examples 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.

It is pleasing to note that candidates are using a good level of accuracy to address the last two unpredictable bullet points in particular. Some candidates lacked accuracy in the two unpredictable bullet points, and some lacked accuracy throughout the writing in areas such as spelling, lack of accents, verb control and dictionary misuse.

Component 2: Question Paper 2: Listening

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

Some candidates, however, did find some challenge across the question papers.

Finally, in **Listening**, some candidates did not recognise a range of qualifiers and so lost marks. Lack of detail, where it was required, also let down some candidates.

Component 3: performance: Talking

The overall quality of candidate performance was high.

Presentation section (10 marks)

Candidates performed very well in the presentation section of the performance. In most of the evidence sampled, candidates were awarded the upper 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)

In the evidence sampled, candidates coped well and 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

In **Reading**, the majority of candidates coped well, but there were questions which some candidates found more challenging.

Text 1 question (a) (i) ‘How much rubbish did the volunteers collect from the beach?’: some candidates did not translate *más de* and therefore lost the mark by just answering ‘50 bags’. At National 5 level, candidates should be looking for qualifiers and detail in their answers, even when they may be one-mark questions. Question 1 (d) proved to be challenging for some candidates where they mistranslated *residuos* as ‘residue’ and therefore lost the mark. Some candidates did not recognise the phrase *medio ambiente* and wrongly translated this as ‘atmosphere’ in question 1 (e) (i). In this same question some candidates did recognise *medio ambiente* as ‘environment’, but translated *interesa* as ‘cares for’ and therefore lost the mark.

In text 2 question (d): ‘Many girls join the workforce at an early age. What types of jobs do girls often do? State any **two**’ some candidates lost marks for mistranslating *servicio doméstico* as servants or cleaners. In question 2 (e) ‘In what **three** ways have the lives of more than 5000 girls in El Salvador improved?’ some candidates lost marks due to inaccuracies in translation, such as responding with ‘study for a year’ rather than the correct ‘study for one more year’.

In text 3 question 3 (a) there were mistranslations of *tecnologías de la comunicación* with many answers poorly expressed in English. Centres should remind their candidates about the importance of clear English in the wording of answers. For question 3 (c) some candidates mistranslated *compañeros* as ‘boyfriend’ or ‘friends’. Finally, in question 3 (d) some candidates had problems with basic routine verbs, with some mistranslating *se levanta* for ‘she wakes up’.

In **Writing**, the overall standard this year was very good, and all markers commented favourably on the standard they had seen. 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 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. Some of the inaccuracies are not serious, but where they are combined throughout a piece of writing this leads to lower marks: examples such as capital letters on months, indefinite articles with jobs, lack of control with accents, using adjectives instead of nouns (most commonly *español* for *España*) were some of the more common inaccuracies found.

Component 2: Question Paper 2: Listening

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

In question 1 (a), 'Complete the table: When does she read; For how long?', some candidates only answered the second point (*una hora y media*) with 'one hour', and missed out on the full 2 marks available. In question 1 (e) 'Gabriela uses her tablet for reading. What else does she use it for? State **two** things' some candidates did not recognise the verb *descargar* and mixed up *compro* with *aplicaciones*, and therefore wrongly answered with the response 'buying apps'.

In question 2 (e) 'There is also a free camping zone at the festival. What can you do there? State **two** things' some candidates did not recognise the verb *descansar* and instead guessed wrongly at the answer. In question 2 (g), 'Why are her parents allowing her to go with her friends this year? Give any **two** reasons' some candidates mistranslated *confían en mí* as 'my parents have confidence in me' as they did not recognise the verb *confiar*. Across the incorrect answers there was also a distinct lack of clarity of response, and candidates were too general in their answers, thus losing marks.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Conversation section

Some candidates found the conversation section of the performance more demanding as it is less predictable and involves a series of questions. However, among the candidates sampled, only a few candidates scored 6, with no candidates scoring below this.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

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 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.

Component 1: Question Paper 1: Reading and Writing

In **Reading**, candidates should be familiar with and recognise the structures, grammar and detailed language appropriate for this level. Knowledge of adjectives and nouns would help with translating words such as *cómoda* (text 3 question d – some candidates had looked this up in the dictionary and wrote ‘chest of drawers’ for ‘comfortable clothes’) and *salón* (in the same question there were responses with ‘hairdressing salon’ for living room). Re-visiting their answers and looking at the questions to check that the responses make sense is also to be encouraged. Knowledge and awareness of detailed language under the broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture are also useful for this skill.

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. Candidates should be able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points, so practice at dealing with these unpredictable elements should be encouraged.

Component 2: Question Paper 2: Listening

For **Listening**, candidates should be familiar with a range of basic 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. Centres should ensure that candidates cover vocabulary such as qualifiers (*un poco, más de*, etc), time phrases, numbers and technology.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Pronunciation was one of the main issues for many of the candidates who performed less well. Assessors and verifiers must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content and language resource may be in the performance. In some candidates’ performances, incorrect pronunciation, intonation and word stress detracted from the overall impression of the performance. Centres are advised to continue to encourage their candidates to use listening materials, for example, as a source for modelling their pronunciation.

Grammatical accuracy was generally good, if not very good, in the presentation section, but in the conversation section some performances exposed errors with verb endings and agreement of adjectives. Centres are advised to continue with grammar practice and to encourage candidates to use a variety of persons and tenses, where appropriate.

In general, among the candidates sampled, performances were delivered with a good range of detailed language and structures as expected at National 5. Where candidates listed nouns (either in the conversation or presentation) this limited scope for use of detailed language. Candidates should not be encouraged to use lists.

Many performances demonstrated confident delivery, good flow in the presentation and a variety of opinions and time phrases. 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.

Centres are also encouraged to continue to ensure that candidates have strategies for asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to utter, when they have not understood an aspect of the conversation. Where candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should try to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic.

The length of performances (notably presentations) varied. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation and the conversation should last that is provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information (National 5)*.

A few of the conversations were prolonged — centres are reminded that this does not necessarily benefit the candidate.

There was a tendency for candidates to give what appeared to be rehearsed, short 'presentation-like' 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 questions to candidates which may 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 2015	3968
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	4417
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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	59.3%	59.3%	2620	71
B	19.3%	78.7%	854	60
C	11.6%	90.3%	513	50
D	3.6%	93.9%	159	45
No award	6.1%	-	271	-

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.