



Course report 2025

National 5 Spanish

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

For information about the performance–talking, which is internally assessed, please refer to the 2024–25 Qualification Verification Summary Report on the [subject page](#) of our website.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 6,520

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 6,782

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	3,832	56.5	56.5	83
B	1,070	15.8	72.3	70
C	842	12.4	84.7	58
D	633	9.3	94.0	45
No award	405	6.0	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 70%
- 'many' means 50% to 69%
- 'some' means 25% to 49%
- 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading paper contained a good range of topics across the three texts. It covered the contexts of society (text 1, young people and pets), culture (text 2, going on holiday with children) and learning (text 3, fairy tales being used in school). 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. As in previous years, there were few questions where candidates did not respond.

The questions following each of the three texts were clearly worded and accessible to candidates, making it straightforward for most candidates to locate the answers in the text. The supported questions worked well, especially questions 1(c)(ii) and 2(e), where most candidates gained the marks. Question 1(a) was more demanding than anticipated.

Question paper 1: Writing

The writing question paper, which is always on the context of employability, required candidates to reply to a job advert email for a lifeguard. As part of the assessment, candidates should address the six bullet points relating to information in the job advert: four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. The unpredictable bullet points were 'what languages you speak' and 'why you like to swim'. Both unpredictable bullet points were relevant to the job advert and accessible for candidates.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening paper, there was 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 question paper covered the context of employability. After each item, candidates answered questions in English. The content and questions were accessible for candidates.

Assignment–writing

Candidate performance in the assignment–writing was similar to previous years, with candidates selecting a range of topics from the three contexts of society, learning and culture.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Many candidates performed well across all three texts, demonstrating good reading skills and achieving a good distribution of marks.

Candidates performed well in the reading question paper, with most candidates completing the paper in the allocated time. Most candidates provided detail in their answers using qualifiers, adjectives and adverbs.

Most candidates performed well in the following questions:

- questions 1(c)(ii) and question 2(c): both questions were answered well
- question 2(d)(i): correctly translating both the nouns and adjectives in *playas bonitas* (beautiful beaches), *puertos pesqueros* (fishing ports) and *restaurantes típicos* (typical restaurants)
- question 2(e): correctly translating *disfrutar de unas vacaciones inolvidables* (enjoy an unforgettable holiday)
- question 3(a)(ii): providing the detail required in *explorar su imaginación* (explore their imagination) and *desarrollar su interés en la lectura* (develop an interest in reading)
- question 3(d)(ii): correctly translating *los miércoles durante la hora de comer* (on Wednesdays during lunch)

Many candidates performed well in the following questions:

- question 1(c)(i): showing good understanding of the phrase *sacar malas notas* (get bad grades)
- question 1(c)(iii): good evidence of detailed translation of *una decisión muy positiva* (a very positive decision), although a few omitted 'very', and did not gain the mark
- question 2(a): translating *descubren culturas diferentes* (discover different cultures) and *ven otras formas de vivir* (see other ways of living), and gained both marks
- question 3(c): understanding *los animales que hablan* (animals that talk), *los personajes que tienen poderes mágicos* (characters with magic powers) and *los superhéroes que triunfan al final* (superheroes who win in the end)

Candidates showed confidence and skill in using the dictionary to help them recognise less familiar verbs and phrases. They coped well in understanding familiar language in a less familiar context.

Question paper 1: Writing

Many candidates performed as expected in this question paper, showing that they had prepared well.

Most candidates were well-prepared for bullet points 1 to 4 and were comfortable with the requirements for the writing question paper in terms of content and language resource. In the writing paper, many candidate responses were very good, not only in the first four bullet points, but also in the way candidates addressed the last two bullet points. There were many examples of detailed language, range of structure and high levels of accuracy. Many candidates had prepared very well and used conjunctions and adjectival agreement accurately, as well as a range of tenses and vocabulary structures. Very few candidates did not attempt this paper, and most candidates attempted the two unpredictable bullet points.

As in previous years, most candidates wrote a well-structured email, which was relevant to the job advert, containing language and structures appropriate to the

level. There was less evidence of long lists of nouns and repetition, and more candidates continue to produce a varied and succinct piece of writing.

Some candidates used a good range of language and structures in bullet points 1 to 4, for example *vivo aquí desde hace quince años* (I have been living here for 15 years), *me dicen que soy muy trabajadora* (I'm told that I am very hardworking) and *se me dan bien las matemáticas* (I am good at maths). This is good practice. 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.

Many candidates addressed bullet point 5 successfully (what languages you speak) by using *hablo* (I speak), but some used more sophisticated expressions such as *tengo conocimientos de* (I have knowledge of) and there was evidence of additional detail from some candidates. Some expressed opinions on languages and a few candidates provided advantages of knowing another language.

In bullet point 6 (why you like to swim), most candidates answered this by using the structure *me gusta* (I like) followed by *porque* (because). Many candidates provided highly accurate reasons why they liked to swim, for example *es divertido* (it is fun), *es buen ejercicio* (it is good exercise) and *me ayuda a mantenerme en forma* (it helps me to keep fit). A few candidates gave more unusual reasons, *me encanta explorar el mar* (I love to explore the sea) and a few gave additional information such as *he estado haciéndolo toda mi vida* (I have been doing it all my life).

Question paper 2: Listening

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

Most candidates performed well in the following questions:

- question 1(a): understanding the jobs *programador* (programmer) or *profesor de informática* (computing teacher)
- question 2(a): understanding the phrase *en el centro de la ciudad* (in the city or town centre)
- question 2(e): understanding the number *treinta* (30)

Many candidates performed well in the following questions:

- question 2(b): understanding the phrases *no hay mucho trabajo* (there is not a lot of work) or *hay muchos estudiantes que buscan trabajo* (there are lots of students looking for work or jobs)
- question 2(c): understanding the time phrase *los domingos* (Sundays)

Assignment–writing

Most candidates submitted very good pieces of writing. There was a good range of topics from each of the three contexts of society, learning and culture, for example family, friendship, healthy living, ICT, school, holidays, town, media, environment and film. Some candidates wrote about less common topics, such as ‘the importance of travel’, ‘the influence of music in my life’ and ‘if I were headteacher, I would...’. Most candidates used detailed language appropriate to the level, with some very good examples where candidates included detail 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 throughout.

The presentation of most candidates’ work was very good, and most had ticked the relevant box in the answer booklet for the context chosen and included a title in English. Most candidates had well-structured essays and used a good range of vocabulary, including time phrases and a variety of tenses. Most candidates were able to express both positive and negative ideas and opinions and many were able to give reason for these opinions.

The recommended word length for assignment–writing is 120 to 200 words, and some candidates went beyond this, but most were able to maintain high accuracy and provide a good range of detailed information and opinions. However, this is not the recommended approach as exceeding the word length can be problematic for candidates.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

There was an element of detail required in many of the answers, which some candidates did not provide. There were many examples of poor spelling in English.

Some candidates missed marks by not providing qualifiers or other detail in their answers, or by not looking closely enough at the detail in the text. Candidates did not always think about the context of the word. A few clearly guessed the answer without checking the meaning in the dictionary, for example:

Text 1

- question 1(a): most candidates did not gain the mark because they either omitted the word ‘almost’ (*casi*) and/or mistranslated *ocho mil* (8 thousand) as 8 million
- question 1(a)(iii): many candidates answered with the adjective ‘happy’ (*contento*), but the comparative ‘happier’ (*más contento*) was needed for the mark

Text 2

- question 2(b): *tener un poco de responsabilidad* (have a bit of responsibility). Some candidates mistranslated this as ‘have little responsibility’, which is incorrect
- question 2(d)(ii): *llevar su propia comida* (take your own food or lunch). Some candidates mistranslated *llevar* as ‘wear’, which does not make sense in this context. Some candidates mistranslated *propia* as ‘proper’, which is incorrect

Text 3

- question 3(a)(i): *un recurso educativo importante* (an important educational resource). A few candidates mistranslated *recurso* as ‘resort’, which is incorrect
- question 3(d)(i): *una fuente maravillosa de vocabulario* (a marvellous source of vocabulary). Some candidates translated this as ‘a source of marvellous vocabulary’, which has a different meaning due to word order. Some candidates thought that *fuelle* was ‘fountain’, which was not correct in this context

- question 3(d)(iii): a lot of detail was required in each of the possible answers and some candidates did not provide enough to gain the marks. Some candidates omitted the word ‘pupils’ (*los alumnos*) and a few mistranslated *alemán* (German) as ‘Germany’, which did not make sense. Some candidates mixed up the subjects of the verbs and answered incorrectly with ‘the pupils smiling at the audience’ for the second possible answer *las sonrisas de los espectadores* (the smiles from the audience)

Question paper 1: Writing

A few candidates found the task demanding and had not prepared for the predictable bullet points. As in previous years, a few candidates found the unpredictable bullet points challenging. In addressing bullet point 5 (what languages you speak), some candidates did not correctly conjugate the verb *hablar* (to speak) or *saber* (to know). There was some confusion between *me gusta* (I like) and *me gustaría* (I would like to). Accuracy continues to be the main challenge for some candidates, both in the predictable and unpredictable bullet points, and in particular accuracy with verbs. Poor dictionary use, L1 and/or other language interference, and literal translations of idiomatic phrases were again the three main factors affecting accuracy. Some candidates showed very poor spelling.

Other areas candidates found demanding included:

- omitting essential accents or adding accents to words when not needed
- poor spelling of high frequency words, for example *Escocia* (Scotland) and *español* (Spanish)
- conjugating verbs in the first-person present tense: some candidates wrongly used infinitives
- creating an accurate sentence using *me gusta* (I like): some candidates wrote *me gusta nado* (I like I swim), instead of *me gusta nadar* (I like to swim). A few candidates omitted the article, which is normally required in Spanish, *me gusta la natación* (I like swimming)

- not including a verb when addressing the unpredictable bullet points: a few candidates wrote *divertido* (fun) or *interesante* (interesting) for bullet point 6, which was not enough detail
- the two unpredictable bullet points: a few candidates did not attempt these and were awarded 12 marks as a maximum, in line with the marking instructions. Some candidates did not attempt one of the unpredictable bullet points and were awarded 16 marks as a maximum
- a few candidates did not manage to produce an acceptable job application. In some instances, they produced a long piece of writing that did not meet the criteria to gain 12 marks due to lack of accuracy, and others wrote a few lines that were accurate, but didn't provide enough detail for the level

Question paper 2: Listening

There was a lack of accuracy in candidate responses, for example:

- question 1(c)(i): some candidates gained the mark for 'prepare coffees' (*preparar los cafés*), but many found the second answer more challenging 'clean tables' (*limpiar las mesas*)
- question 1(c)(ii): this was challenging for many candidates, with only some gaining the full 2 marks for the possible answers: *diez minutos andanado de mi casa* (10 minute walk/10 minutes from my/his/their house), *ahorrar dinero* (save money) and *charlar con los turistas* (chat to the tourists)
- question 1(d): some candidates translated *ser feliz* (be happy) as 'self-belief', which is incorrect
- question 2(d): some candidates did not include 'more' (*más*) in the answer 'more independent' (*más independiente*) and some omitted the verbs in the answers 'get to know new people' (*conocer a gente nueva*) and 'learn about the world of work' (*aprender del mundo laboral*), and they missed out on marks

There were examples of poor spelling and expression in English; however, candidates were not penalised for this.

Assignment–writing

Most candidates produced a piece of writing that fulfilled the criteria relating to 12, 16 or 20 marks. Candidates who achieved less than 12 marks were often repetitive in their use of expression or included excessive listing. A greater range of expression and more accuracy were required. Common errors included, for example:

- wrong adjectival agreement, gender, verb endings, or lack of consistency in spelling
- a few candidates did not communicate their ideas by missing out key words
- there were frequent errors of punctuation and accents in a few pieces of writing
- there were a few common errors in Spanish, for example *no me gusta* (I don't like) requires *ni* (nor) instead of *y* (and) when listing further information, *y* (and) should be changed to *e* (and) before a word starting with an 'eeh' sound, such as *inglés* (English)
- when discussing the topic of school, *estoy en cuarto* and *estoy en el cuarto curso* are both acceptable ways of expressing 'I am in 4th year', but some candidates wrongly combined the two
- a few candidates showed confusion between the adverb *bien* and the adjective *buen/bueno/buena*

To achieve full marks, candidates need to write in an organised and structured way, expressing a range of ideas and opinions. There needs to be a good degree of grammatical accuracy using detailed language throughout, including a wide range of structures and/or verbs. Some candidates started well but then were unable to maintain high levels of accuracy and range of detailed language. In some cases, this was due to them going beyond the recommended word length of 120 to 200 words.

In other assignments:

- some candidates did not go into enough depth in their chosen topic and then went on to discuss another topic, which was not relevant to their title
- a few candidates wrote the title in Spanish or did not include a title at all
- a few pieces of writing did not relate to the title

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- read questions carefully, then respond by giving the correct amount of information, ensuring that enough detail is given, as required at National 5
- know that if qualifiers are in the text, they should appear in the answer
- refer to the marking instructions for reading, writing and listening (available in the National 5 Spanish past papers on our [website](#)) as these show the level of detail required for answers. Candidates should be familiar with the approach behind these, for example where a candidate should provide detail to access the full range of marks
- make their handwriting legible
- indicate on their answer booklet if they are using the additional pages to write answers, for example by writing an asterisk (*)
- regularly practise answering exam-type questions with a similar structure and standard to the course assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- are familiar with, and recognise the structures, grammar, and detailed language appropriate for this level
- are able to translate common verbs, for example *aprender* (to learn), *conocer* (to get to know), *tener* (to have), *compartir* (to share) and *aumentar* (to increase) and common nouns, for example *la gente* (people) and *la comida* (food or lunch), especially with the use of a dictionary
- continue to develop dictionary skills as part of the course and think about the context of a word to decide which meaning is most appropriate
- know they must translate the whole answer, for example right to the end of the sentence

Question paper 1: Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- develop ways of addressing the first four predictable bullet points that allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs and tenses
- can provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points and this should contain a verb
- practise manipulating the language in a range of unfamiliar bullet points
- know that they do not have to provide a long formal introduction and/or end to the job application, as this can prevent candidates from performing well in the required areas of the job application
- avoid writing long lists and write legibly
- be accurate in using the infinitive after certain verb phrases, for example *me gusta* (I like), *voy a* (I am going to) and *para* (in order to)
- take time to check spelling and accents in a bilingual dictionary

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- are familiar with a range of basic vocabulary from the four contexts of society, learning, employability, culture
- have knowledge of words and phrases, including a good range of adjectives, and know and understand a range of tenses and verb forms
- have opportunities to practise listening to Spanish using equipment as in the exam
- pay attention to detail, and 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
- are familiar with time phrases, for example *a la semana* (each week), *los domingos* (on Sundays), *todo el día* (all day) and are aware that the currency of Spain is euros

- have knowledge of common verbs, for example *trabajar* (to work), *ahorrar* (to save), *salir* (to go out), *ayudar* (to help) and *charlar* (to chat) and common nouns, such as *el dinero* (money), *los clientes* (customers), *mi amigo* (my friend) and *un piso* (a flat)
- be familiar with some less common modal verbs, for example *podía* (I was able to) and *tuve que* (I had to)
- tick the correct number of boxes in supported questions, as a few candidates missed marks due to ticking too few or too many boxes

Assignment-writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- have a strong focus on one of the contexts and a specific topic
- have good structure, include a range of ideas, opinions with reasons and not write long lists of nouns and verbs
- include a clear introduction and conclusion
- include conjunctions where appropriate, a range of verbs, verb forms and some tenses
- include paragraphs, and make sure the title (in English) clearly relates to the content
- complete the assignments in black or blue pen (not pencil), write legibly and make sure they are submitted without any teacher or lecturer annotations

Appendix: 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 is 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 to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise 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.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

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](#).