



Course report 2022

Subject	Spanish
Level	Higher

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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	2460
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	52.5	Cumulative percentage	52.5	Number of candidates	1295	Minimum mark required	72
B	Percentage	16.6	Cumulative percentage	69.1	Number of candidates	405	Minimum mark required	60
C	Percentage	14.2	Cumulative percentage	83.3	Number of candidates	350	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	9.7	Cumulative percentage	93.0	Number of candidates	240	Minimum mark required	36
No award	Percentage	7.0	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	170	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

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

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The course assessments covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability, culture. These contexts had been shared nationally with candidates prior to the course assessments as part of the revision support offered by SQA this year.

Markers noted that the reading and directed writing question papers and marking instructions were fair and offered an appropriate level of challenge at Higher.

The listening question paper was very challenging for candidates and the grade boundaries adjusted accordingly.

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates continue to perform very well in the reading question paper, especially in the comprehension questions. Markers felt that all questions were accessible. The questions were balanced in terms of high, low and average demand, and there was a balance of questions worth 1, 2 or 3 marks. The overall purpose question was well done. The translation had a degree of challenge, and candidates found one sense unit particularly challenging.

Candidates read one text in Spanish, in the context of learning, about the benefits of the Erasmus exchange programme. In general, there was a very competent response to the comprehension questions and many candidates understood almost all of the main points.

The text also contained a section for candidates to translate into English. This requires a high degree of grammatical accuracy and high-order thinking. Full marks are only awarded in the translation with a very strong rendering of the text into English. Candidates seem to be dedicating more time to the translation and most candidates made an attempt at this part of the paper.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

In the directed writing question paper, candidates were offered a choice of two scenarios, each of which had six unseen bullet points that they had to address. Scenario 1 was in the context of culture and scenario 2 was in the context of employability.

Candidates have an element of personalisation and choice in this paper. In the best performances, candidates wrote six distinct paragraphs that addressed each bullet point in a balanced way. Similarly, in the strongest performances, candidates had a balance in terms of content, grammatical accuracy and language resource appropriate to Higher level. Most candidates chose scenario 2: employability.

Overall, candidates did well in the directed writing paper and could adapt prepared material effectively to address less predictable bullet points. Some candidates found it more challenging to address all six bullet points at the level required for Higher.

Question paper 2: Listening

Many candidates found the question paper to be challenging this year, and it was evident that preparation and practice had been affected by the disruption of the pandemic.

The listening question paper covered the context of society. Candidates listened to a monologue about the differences between town and country, and a conversation about television viewing habits. There was a balance of questions worth 1 or 2 marks. There were a range of questioning techniques over the two items in the paper.

Overall, candidates did not perform well in this paper.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected. At Higher, candidates have a discussion (in Spanish) with the teacher or lecturer. Candidates are assessed on at least two of the four contexts: society, learning, employability, culture.

The revised general and detailed marking instructions allow teachers and lecturers to mark candidates' performances with confidence.

Most centres sampled this session marked candidates' performances in line with national standards. Teachers and lecturers play a pivotal role in guiding candidates prior to the assessment in their choice of contexts and topics. In the sample of centres verified this year, teachers and lecturers had encouraged candidates to identify topics that gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities against the four aspects of content, accuracy, language resource and interaction.

The length of the performances sampled varied. Where performances sampled went beyond or were significantly shorter than the recommended duration, neither approach was necessarily to the candidate's benefit.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Overall, the performance of candidates in Higher Spanish was good this year. The question papers for reading and directed writing worked well and allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Markers noted that the overall quality of writing was very good but some candidates did not manage to write at a level required for Higher.

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates performed particularly well in the comprehension questions in the reading question paper, especially in questions worth 1 or 2 marks. Many candidates found idiomatic expressions such as *vivir por su cuenta* difficult. In some cases, candidates may have understood the Spanish text, but they were disadvantaged by not being able to express the meaning in English, and they did not gain the marks.

Some questions, which were more straightforward, allowed candidates to access the text. Candidates responded well to the signposting in the questions to find the answer in the text, and there were few instances where candidates gave an answer in the wrong place. There were few questions with no responses, and candidates were using strategies to attempt to answer all questions.

In the overall purpose question, candidates performed well and many were able to give clear justification for their assertion. Some candidates quoted in Spanish from the text without explaining why this quote backs up their assertion. Many candidates gave their answers to the comprehension questions as their justification, and therefore did not gain the mark.

Candidates found the translation challenging, although most did manage to gain marks in this question. They found the range of tenses difficult to translate: an infinitive phrase, two irregular perfect tenses, three preterite tenses and three present tense verbs. The phrase *Desde que volvió* caused confusion and many candidates translated it with the wrong subject. Many candidates omitted either *ya*, *mucho* or both in sense unit 4. Very few candidates gained 2 marks for sense unit 5 as the phrase *con qué fluidez* was very challenging.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

In the directed writing question paper, candidates performed equally well in both scenarios, although most candidates chose scenario 2: employability. The level of demand in both scenarios was appropriate and allowed candidates to display their knowledge of the language. Overall, the quality of writing was very good. Most candidates addressed all six bullet points. Essays that gained high marks tended to have well-prepared introductions and conclusions and included other information that was relevant to the scenarios. This added to the overall impression. Many candidates made good use of learned material, which they could adapt to help them address the bullet points.

Some candidates found it difficult to produce appropriate content and high levels of accuracy throughout. Common errors included confusion between preterite and imperfect tenses, gender of nouns, agreements, prepositions, incorrect verb forms, use of tenses, use of definite and indefinite articles. The use of *ser* and *estar* is not always secure. There were some examples where candidates gave a very brief response to one or more bullet points.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, the topics were accessible and candidates could relate to the content. The topic of reality television (item 2) is very current. There was a lot of common vocabulary. Some candidates performed well, especially when they gave detailed answers.

Performance–talking

Most candidates coped well with the format of the task and were able to sustain the discussion for the recommended duration. The discussion should last approximately 10 minutes. Candidates who were able to use interjections and ask relevant questions could sustain the discussion more confidently. Based on the samples verified, many candidates gained pegged marks 15 or higher, and most of those gained pegged marks 27 or 30. Few candidates gained pegged marks 12 or lower.

Where teachers or lecturers used open-ended questions, this was more effective in eliciting detailed and complex language from candidates. Candidates covered a range of topics and a variety of structures, vocabulary, and tenses appropriate to Higher. Some performances sampled, evidenced confident delivery with little undue hesitation, very good grammatical accuracy and use of interjections and questions by the candidate. Many confident performances demonstrated very good language resource.

Among the samples verified, weaker performances often contained errors that detracted from the overall impression. In some instances, candidates did not use detailed and complex language, and this detracted from the overall quality. Some candidates could not always be understood as there were some serious errors, for example the wrong gender of nouns, incorrect agreement of adjectives, and keywords missing from responses.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

In both reading and listening, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the questions carefully and look or listen for the signposts in the Spanish text or recording
- ◆ give as much detail as they can, including adjectives and adverbs
- ◆ make sure they know how many marks are available for each question
- ◆ refer to the detailed marking instructions for reading and listening after completing past papers to gain an understanding of the detail required at Higher level
- ◆ re-read their answers to make sure they make sense in English, especially in the translation section of reading

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ know the comprehension questions offer signposts and keywords to help them identify where to find the answer in the text
- ◆ provide two or three distinct answers where a question is worth 2 or 3 marks
- ◆ are aware that where a question says ‘State any one thing’, there is more than one possible answer
- ◆ in the overall purpose question:
 - know that one assertion and one justification, with evidence from the text, should gain 2 marks
 - know that the evidence from the text must not come from the answers to the comprehension questions
 - are discouraged from quoting in Spanish from the text and from adding a word-for-word translation of the quote into English, as this does not add anything to their justification
 - consider the use of language in the text to help them make their justification
 - don’t write excessively in response to this question. This could lead to not having enough time for the translation question
- ◆ in the translation:
 - are aware that accuracy plays a very important role in this question and that incorrect verb tenses will not gain marks in the sense unit
 - re-read each sense unit to make sure they have translated every word. Full marks will only be awarded when there is a good and complete translation of the text into English

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the scenarios and the bullet points carefully and make sure they address all information required
- ◆ are aware that the first bullet point requires them to address two distinct pieces of information
- ◆ provide an equal and balanced response to each bullet point as they are required to sustain content, accuracy and language resource appropriate to Higher throughout the directed writing piece
- ◆ include an introduction that refers to the scenario and a further six paragraphs of equal length for the best performance
- ◆ are aware the paragraphs should address the six bullet points fully using appropriate content while sustaining accuracy and language resource appropriate to the level throughout the whole essay
- ◆ attempt to use different verb forms, going beyond the first person: bullet points often require them to write about what they did with other people
- ◆ incorporate some idiomatic expressions into their writing
- ◆ make sure they can use the conditional tense in the final bullet point
- ◆ are comfortable using subjunctive phrases, for example *cuando sea*, *cuando tenga*, *cuando vaya* when writing about their intentions in the final bullet point
- ◆ refer to the detailed marking instructions so that they are aware of what is required to achieve full marks in this question paper. They should apply these marking instructions to their own writing, or to that of their peers, to gain an understanding of what they can do to improve as they are developing their skills in writing

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the questions carefully in advance of listening to the recording
- ◆ are aware of how many marks are required for the answer and should highlight the question words and the key phrases that signpost the answer in the recording
- ◆ reflect on the vocabulary they are listening for, based on the questions, before the recording begins
- ◆ provide the level of detailed information required at Higher
- ◆ refer to the detailed marking instructions, published with past papers, to become more aware of what is required in this paper
- ◆ are given grammar practice, and coverage of the rules of the language as an integral part of learning and teaching
- ◆ use a variety of persons and tenses, as appropriate to topics

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ have strategies for asking questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to use when they have not understood any part of the discussion

To help when preparing candidates for future assessment, teachers and lecturers can refer to Understanding Standards examples of Higher performances published on SQA's secure website, and to the following information in the Higher Modern Languages Course Specification:

- ◆ 'course assessment structure: performance–talking' section for the recommended duration of the discussion, to ensure candidates can demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of the task
- ◆ 'appendix 1: course support notes', relating to the 'Approaches to learning and teaching: talking' section for examples of how to develop candidates' talking skills and suggestions of talking activities as part of learning and teaching
- ◆ appendix 2: productive grammar grid, for information on the level of language

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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, SQA holds 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 SQA's 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. SQA 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.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).