



Course report 2025

Higher 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: 3,034

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 3,168

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 | 1,641 | 51.8 | 51.8 | 84 |
| B | 560 | 17.7 | 69.5 | 72 |
| C | 437 | 13.8 | 83.3 | 60 |
| D | 330 | 10.4 | 93.7 | 48 |
| No award | 200 | 6.3 | 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

The course assessments covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. The question papers for reading, listening and directed writing performed as expected and allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper was accessible and offered an appropriate level of challenge. Candidates read one text in Spanish, in the context of society, about friendships in Argentina.

Markers noted that the questions were accessible and balanced in terms of high, low and average demand, and there was a range of questions worth 1, 2 or 3 marks.

The translation question had a degree of challenge, and some candidates found the second and third sense units particularly challenging. Most candidates attempted the translation.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper was fair and offered an appropriate level of challenge. Candidates had 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 learning and scenario 2 was in the context of employability. The level of demand in both scenarios was appropriate and allowed candidates to display their knowledge of the language. Candidates have an element of personalisation and choice in this paper. There was an equal number of candidates who chose scenario 1 and 2.

Most candidates addressed all six bullet points; however, some found it more challenging to address all six bullet points at the level required for Higher.

Question paper 2: Listening

Markers noted that the listening paper was accessible, and candidates engaged well with the topic. Candidates attempted all questions; there were very few no responses this year.

The listening question paper covered the context of culture. Candidates listened to a monologue in which a young person spoke about his experiences of moving home, and a conversation where sustainability issues at high school were discussed. There was a balance of questions worth 1 or 2 marks.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as intended. Candidates choose a stimulus on a topic of their choice and write discursively using detailed and complex language in response to the stimulus.

The assignment–writing is designed to offer an element of personalisation and choice and give candidates opportunities to write on topics that interests them.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Many candidates responded well to the comprehension questions and understood almost all of the main points. Most candidates answered questions 1, 2 and 3 correctly.

Some candidates found questions 5(a) and 5(b) more challenging.

Some candidates understood the Spanish text but were not able to give the meaning in English, and they missed out on marks.

Some of the more straightforward questions allowed candidates to access the text successfully. Most candidates responded well to the signposting in the questions and could find the correct answer in the text.

In the overall purpose question, most 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.

Most candidates did well in the translation. Some candidates chose to do the translation before the comprehension questions. This strategy is often disadvantageous to candidates as they do not yet have the full context of the text. Candidates should always complete the comprehension questions before attempting the translation.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Many candidates performed well in each of the two scenarios. Overall, the quality of writing was very good. In the strongest performances, candidates:

- wrote six distinct paragraphs that addressed each bullet point in a balanced way

- had a balance in terms of content, grammatical accuracy and language resource appropriate to Higher level
- had well-prepared introductions and conclusions
- included other information that was relevant to the scenarios, which added to the overall impression
- made good use of learned material, which they could adapt to help them address the bullet points

Many candidates chose to write about their experience of life in a Spanish-speaking country (other than simply Spain) and were more adventurous in their writing. They made connections between writing skills and other linguistic and cultural competencies, such as finding out about different cultural aspects of life in Spanish-speaking countries.

A few candidates did not attempt three of the six bullet points, and were awarded 0 marks, in line with the marking instructions.

Question paper 2: Listening

Most candidates performed well in this paper. Candidates attempted all questions, understanding most of the information given.

Some candidates did not provide the level of accuracy and detail needed, and missed out on marks, for example in question 2(a)(ii), candidates wrote '25' instead of 'more than 25'.

Assignment–writing

Most candidates performed very well in the assignment–writing, achieving 16 or 20 marks (out of 20); however, some candidates produced a personal response rather than a discursive writing piece.

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 and proofread 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 that 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
- know that if a question says, 'State any one thing', there is more than one possible answer
- for the overall purpose question, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:
 - 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
- for the translation, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:
 - are aware that accuracy plays a very important role in this question and that incorrect verb tenses in the sense unit do not gain marks
 - re-read each sense unit to make sure they have translated every word. Full marks are only awarded when there is an accurate 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 have to sustain content, accuracy and language resource appropriate to the level throughout
- attempt to use different verb forms, going beyond the first person where appropriate
- 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. 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 their skills in writing
- research different aspects of cultural, societal, learning and employability topics in Spanish-speaking countries. This helps their response reflect a more personalised approach. Presenting their findings in class helps make connections

between writing and other skills of language learning, for example listening and talking

- know they must address each bullet point. If three or more of the bullet points are not addressed, the mark awarded would be 0, as detailed in the marking instructions

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- use the time before the recording starts to read the questions
- are aware of how many marks each question is worth
- highlight the question words and the key phrases that signpost the answer in the recording
- provide sufficient detail in their answers
- practise grammar and basic vocabulary on a regular basis
- use a variety of persons and tenses, as appropriate to topics

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- explore and discuss aspects of the assessment as outlined in the detailed marking instruction and the coursework assessment task
- produce a response that includes discursive elements, based on a stimulus that provides the opportunity to demonstrate these, using detailed and complex language
- view examples of discursive writing on the [Understanding Standards web page](#) to better understand the style of writing required in the assignment–writing
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen

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](#).