



Course report 2024

Advanced Higher Italian

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.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 19

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 46

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	36	Percentage	78.3	Cumulative percentage	78.3	Minimum mark required	140
B	Number of candidates	4	Percentage	8.7	Cumulative percentage	87.0	Minimum mark required	120
C	Number of candidates	4	Percentage	8.7	Cumulative percentage	95.7	Minimum mark required	100
D	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	2.2	Cumulative percentage	97.8	Minimum mark required	80
No award	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	2.2	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

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 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: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation paper performed as expected. The level of demand was appropriate for the level and was accessible to a range of abilities. Candidates engaged well with the relevant topic of teenage sleep patterns and the impact of smartphones on their lives. The overall purpose question, which requires a more analytical approach, was more challenging for candidates. The translation provided appropriate challenge, and most candidates coped well in this section.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening and discursive writing paper performed as expected. Candidates connected well with the range topics covered. Item 1 explored the increasing popularity of Smart Working in Italy. Item 2 focused on the benefits of working from home from the viewpoint of a working mum. There was a wider range of performances in the discursive writing section, which was more challenging for candidates. All four essay titles were attempted.

Portfolio

Most candidates did well in the portfolio. Candidates chose some new and more uncommon texts this year, which included some medieval, historical and allegorical texts. Niccolò Ammaniti's *Io Non Ho Paura* was a very popular literary text this year.

Many portfolio titles did not lend themselves well to analysis. The full range of pegged marks was awarded.

Performance–talking

Performance in this component was very strong with many candidates performing with a very high level of fluency. Most candidates were well-prepared and coped well with the reintroduction of the requirement to discuss their portfolio.

Immigration was a popular topic for discussion along with environmental issues and the impact of IT and artificial intelligence.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- ◆ most candidates found the comprehension questions accessible
- ◆ questions 3(a), (b) and (c) and 6(a): most candidates answered very well
- ◆ questions 2, 3(d), 5(a) and 6(b), worth 3 or 4 marks: some candidates gained full marks, showing great ability to cope with lengthier sections of text
- ◆ a few candidates gained full marks in the translation

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section:

- ◆ many candidates demonstrated a very good knowledge of vocabulary in the context of employability
- ◆ questions 1(a), (b)(i), (ii), and 2(a)(i), (ii), (b)(i): most candidates answered very well

In the discursive writing section:

- ◆ some candidates produced some excellent pieces, which demonstrated a high degree of accuracy in grammar and flair

Portfolio

There were some excellent portfolios. Candidates who gained the upper pegged marks demonstrated a good degree of analysis in their responses and had chosen a clear and focused title.

Performance–talking

It was evident that many candidates had thoroughly studied their chosen topics, and prepared answers for some of the more predictable and/or expected questions on their portfolio.

Most candidates engaged well with the visiting assessor and the flow of conversation was excellent. Many candidates were able to speak at length and without hesitation and used complex and sophisticated language with a high degree of accuracy.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- ◆ questions 3(b) and 5(b): two pieces of information were required to gain one of the marks, some candidates produced only one piece and missed out on the mark
- ◆ in question 7, the overall purpose question:
 - many candidates found this challenging and tended to summarise areas of the text, repeating information that had already been used to gain marks in the comprehension section
 - in general, there was a lack of reference to writing style and techniques
 - some candidates successfully chose appropriate quotations to illustrate the writer's viewpoint but did not always explain or analyse them effectively
- ◆ in question 8, the translation:
 - some candidates mistranslated *perdersi* in sense unit 3 and referred to its alternative meaning (feeling 'lost' instead of feeling 'left out')
 - few candidates recognised the absolute superlative *issimo* in sense unit 7 (*tardissimo*)

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, candidates missed out on marks most often in the following questions:

- ◆ question 1(c)(ii): few candidates understood the word *scioperi* (strikes)
- ◆ question 1(d): many candidates referred to the work-life balance rather than the work or family-life balance
- ◆ question 2(a)(i): some candidates missed the quantifier *molto* (lots of)
- ◆ question 2(b)(ii): some candidates did not understand *dirige* and the notion of 'leading' a team
- ◆ question 2(d)(i): the word *figli* was translated by some candidates as 'daughters' instead of 'sons' or 'children'
- ◆ question 2(d)(ii): few candidates understood *ragazza alla pari* (au pair) and translated it as 'someone'

In the discursive writing section:

- ◆ many candidates did not address the topic in a full or balanced way
- ◆ some candidates didn't use the higher order or complex structures expected at Advanced Higher level and tended to use language more appropriate to Higher
- ◆ some candidates wrote very long pieces that exceeded the required word count

Portfolio

Some candidates chose titles that were not focused and did not provide opportunities to analyse, compare, contrast and discuss. Their responses were too general and summarised the plot of their chosen book or film or provided a character description.

Candidates who gained higher marks in the portfolio chose a specific area of focus, for example 'To what extent does Ammaniti explore the theme of loss through his main character in *Io Non Ho Paura?*'. They explored it using relevant text quotations, analysing episodes and/or characters that backed up the area of focus.

Some candidates used the first person. This should be avoided and instead use an objective third person approach.

Performance–talking

Some candidates were reluctant to take the initiative and missed the top pegged mark for interaction and maintaining the flow of conversation. A few candidates had errors in basic grammar, for example adjectival agreement, articles and plurals, which at times detracted from the overall impression.

A few candidates Subject Topic List (STL) form did not contain enough detail, and they had difficulty producing content in some of their responses.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the comprehension questions before reading the actual passage as this can give candidates a good feel for the topic and helps them grasp the gist of the content
- ◆ take note of line references and lift their responses from the appropriate section of the passage
- ◆ do not include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers
- ◆ do questions in their given order and not do the overall purpose question and the translation before they have done the comprehension questions. In this way, candidates gain a feel for the passage and a sense of its purpose and significance
- ◆ practise past papers for reading and translation and become familiar with how long to spend on each of the translation, overall purpose and comprehension questions
- ◆ for overall purpose question, recognise key features of persuasive writing that writers often use, for example:
 - use of statistics or data to back up their viewpoint
 - reference to an expert, scientist, professor or eyewitness who backs up their viewpoint
 - use of exaggeration, or varying tone to emphasise the extent of, for example, their outrage and/or sympathy
 - use of, for example, rhetorical questions, exclamation marks, repetition, lists
- ◆ look out for modifiers, qualifiers, quantifiers, comparatives and superlatives, especially in the translation

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ revise basic vocabulary, which often comes up in listening passages, for example numbers, days, months and times
- ◆ revise basic grammar often. Present tense (especially irregulars) was a weaker area this session
- ◆ read the marking instructions in the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) and past papers on [SQA's website](#) to know what they must include to gain high marks
- ◆ use the productive grammar grid in appendix 2 of the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#)
- ◆ use learned material carefully

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ use the sample portfolio logbook in the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Portfolio coursework assessment task](#), or equivalent, to help guide them through the portfolio task
- ◆ choose a title that is focused and specific and gives them opportunities to analyse. Titles, for example 'To what extent does the writer explore the theme of loss, love, poverty, betrayal through the main character or the setting' are focused and often successful
- ◆ are fully aware of the requirement to use a second source in Italian in their portfolio and in their bibliography
- ◆ who base their portfolio on literary texts, read the original text in Italian

Performance–talking

Although performance was very strong, a few candidates missed out on the higher pegged marks due to basic grammatical errors.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ frequently revise the basics of articles, plurals adjective endings and present tense patterns
- ◆ complete their Subject Topic List (STL) forms appropriately. Some topics were unclear, which makes it difficult to cope with more focused questions
- ◆ speak in Italian in pairs, or in groups, from the start of the course to increase their confidence in initiating discussion
- ◆ listen to as much Italian as possible, and as early as possible, to ensure they have the best chance of success

Appendix: 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.

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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).