



Course report 2024

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: 217

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 189

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	137	Percentage	72.5	Cumulative percentage	72.5	Minimum mark required	84
B	Number of candidates	19	Percentage	10.1	Cumulative percentage	82.5	Minimum mark required	72
C	Number of candidates	17	Percentage	9.0	Cumulative percentage	91.5	Minimum mark required	60
D	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	4.2	Cumulative percentage	95.8	Minimum mark required	48
No award	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	4.2	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 1: Reading

The reading question paper was based on the context of employability. The text was about the ideal job, and the topic was relevant to candidates.

The paper included a range of 1, 2 and 3-mark questions that were balanced in terms of higher, lower and average levels of demand. The range of accessible and more challenging questions, particularly the overall purpose question and the translation, helped differentiate candidate performance in line with expectations.

The overall purpose question (question 5) tested candidates' inferential skills, requiring them to discuss whether the writer believed that the ideal job existed, using evidence from the text.

The translation (question 6) is made up of five sense units. Each sense unit contains an element of challenge, from the more straightforward to more complex aspects of grammar, for example idiomatic expression, the correct identification of present and perfect tenses, and using a gerund in English to translate an infinitive in Italian.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper offered candidates a choice of two scenarios based on the contexts of culture and learning. Candidates had to address six unseen bullet points, the first one having two aspects to address.

In scenario 1 (culture), candidates had to write about their experiences at a film festival in Italy, while scenario 2 (learning) they had to write about an exchange trip to Italy.

Both scenarios were very accessible and gave candidates opportunities to show their knowledge of Italian. Most candidates chose scenario 2.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue based on the context of society. The monologue was on the topic of changes to Italian family life and support given to families with young children in other European countries. The dialogue focused on technology.

Both items were relevant to young people's current and/or future experiences and understanding of society, and most candidates attempted these well. Questions varied in level of demand and were well-signposted to help candidates locate answers.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was reinstated this session. Overall, candidates' level of language resource and grammatical accuracy was higher than in the directed writing paper, and many structured a range of ideas well.

Performance–talking

There was a range of performances, but the overall level was very good. The topics selected gave candidates the opportunity to access the higher pegged marks. Many candidates used detailed and complex language in response to open-ended questions.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper. Most answers were very clearly signposted, and most candidates could find the relevant text.

- ◆ question 1(a): some candidates did not equate (dream job) *il lavoro dei propri sogni* with (ideal job) and did not gain the mark
- ◆ questions 1(b), 2(a), (b) and 3(a), (b) and (c): most candidates gained at least 1 mark in these questions worth 2 marks or more
- ◆ questions 2(a) and 3(b): most candidates gained the marks in these straightforward questions
- ◆ questions 2(a) and 3(c): many candidates gained full marks
- ◆ questions 3(a) and 4(b): some candidates did not gain full marks as they did not give enough detail
- ◆ question 5, the overall purpose question: this was answered more consistently than last year
 - a few candidates quoted in Italian from the text without translation or explanation
 - some candidates wrote at length without addressing the question or repeated answers given previously to comprehension questions, and did not gain the marks
- ◆ question 6, the translation: the text contained both straightforward and more challenging structures. Overall, candidates completed the translation well and most demonstrated good awareness of tense
 - a few candidates paraphrased the translation, and a few gave conflicting alternatives
 - overall, sense unit 2 was translated well; however, a few candidates mistranslated the third and fourth words *molto grazie* (many thanks)
 - some candidates found sense unit 4 challenging, particularly *ci vuole pazienza* (you need, it takes, it requires)
 - sense unit 5 was completed well

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Most candidates demonstrated a high level of performance in the directed writing question paper. Both scenarios had a good variety of vocabulary, and opportunities for candidates to provide additional detail.

Many candidates coped well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios, although a few did not specify their exact destination in scenario 2. A few candidates did not gain marks as they missed out one or more bullet points, but most candidates were able to address all bullet points. This suggests that candidates had prepared for this paper.

A few stronger candidates did not cover the bullet points in a balanced way (sometimes covering two bullet points in a single sentence) and they could not access the highest pegged mark. However, most candidates addressed both scenarios well.

Many candidates who did less well had difficulty with verb conjugation. Some candidates had difficulty with possessives, and there was a lack of accents, particularly in typewritten scripts. The last bullet point in both scenarios was challenging for some candidates who could not use the conditional (scenario 1) or future (scenario 2) tenses appropriately.

Many candidates included a good range of verbs and idiomatic expressions in their writing and showed control of perfect and imperfect tenses.

Question paper 2: Listening

Many candidates performed well in this question paper and did very well in questions 1(b)(ii), 2(a)(ii) and (c).

Questions that candidates found most challenging were:

- ◆ question 1(d)(i): some candidates did not give enough detail and missed marks
- ◆ question 1(d)(ii): some candidates misunderstood or did not hear the word *crisi* (crisis)
- ◆ question 1(c): some candidates did not give enough detail and others gained both marks by attempting to cover all three possible answers

Assignment–writing

Many candidates coped well with the requirement to structure their writing, to provide different viewpoints and to draw conclusions. Many candidates used detailed and complex language and a wide range of tenses and structures. Most assignments showed a good level of accuracy, although there was a lack of accents, particularly in typewritten scripts.

Some essay titles did not give candidates enough opportunity to write a balanced argument or to draw a conclusion. Some candidates had difficulty keeping their assignment relevant to the title. A few candidates did not provide a title, making relevance difficult to evaluate. A few candidates wrote the assignment using a dictionary or wordlist without conjugating verbs.

Performance–talking

Many candidates demonstrated a range of structures, vocabulary, and tenses appropriate to the level. Weaker performances tended to include a limited amount of detailed and complex language or did not demonstrate a good degree of grammatical accuracy.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Listening and reading question papers

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ know that before each listening item, they have 1 minute to read the questions. Candidates should do the same in the reading question paper to gain a sense of the content of the text
- ◆ give as much detail as they can in their answers to the questions, including qualifiers and quantifiers
- ◆ review the marking instructions from past papers to help understand:
 - material given in bold, which they must include in their answers
 - the notion of optionality, for example ‘State any one thing’

Question paper 1: Reading

For the overall purpose question, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ do not use their answers to the comprehension questions as evidence to support their assertion
- ◆ identify one or two areas of the text where no marks have been gained as these can often be used in support of an assertion
- ◆ are aware that if they quote an appropriate section of the text as evidence but do not state or paraphrase what the quotation means, they cannot gain the mark
- ◆ do not write excessively in response to this question. This could lead to not having enough time for the translation

For the translation question, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are aware that accuracy plays a very important role in this question and that incorrect verb tenses and adjectives do not gain marks
- ◆ re-read each sense unit to make sure they have translated every word, and it makes sense
- ◆ review the marking instructions from past papers to help understand the division of the translation into sense units, each worth 2 marks

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ provide a balanced response to each bullet point
- ◆ know that for the first bullet point, they have to address two pieces of information
- ◆ read the scenarios and the bullet points carefully and make sure they give all the required information
- ◆ use a variety of tenses and structures to achieve the higher pegged marks
- ◆ use the marking instructions to help prepare for this question paper
- ◆ make use of the productive grammar grid in the [Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) as a guide to the type of language use that is expected at Higher level

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ know that there are specific marking instructions for the assignment–writing, and that these should be used separately from the marking instructions for directed writing
- ◆ structure their writing
- ◆ provide different arguments or viewpoints
- ◆ provide a title that prompts a discursive essay
- ◆ use the marking instructions to help prepare for this question paper
- ◆ view examples of discursive writing on [SQA's Understanding Standards web page](#) to better understand the style of writing required for the assignment–writing
- ◆ have a choice of stimuli at the start of the drafting process, to help them write discursively about a topic

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates that it is rarely to their advantage to extend the discussion beyond the required length.

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](#).