



Course report 2022

Subject	Italian
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	170
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	73.5	Cumulative percentage	73.5	Number of candidates	125	Minimum mark required	80
B	Percentage	12.4	Cumulative percentage	85.9	Number of candidates	20	Minimum mark required	68
C	Percentage	7.0	Cumulative percentage	92.9	Number of candidates	15	Minimum mark required	56
D	Percentage	4.2	Cumulative percentage	97.1	Number of candidates	5	Minimum mark required	44
No award	Percentage	2.9	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	5	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

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper sampled the context of learning. The text explored the topic of learning Chinese in schools and its increasing popularity. The topic was very relevant to candidates.

The paper included a range of 1, 2 and 3-mark questions of higher, lower and average levels of demand.

The overall purpose question (question 5) tested candidates' inferential skills, requiring them to discuss how worthwhile it is to learn Chinese, using evidence from the text.

The translation (question 6) comprises five sense units, where each unit contains an element of challenge, from the more straightforward to more complex aspects of grammar, such as the identification of correct tense, or idiomatic expression tense. Full marks for individual sense units required strong English expression as well as accurate grammatical knowledge.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper offered candidates a choice of two scenarios from the contexts of society and culture. Candidates had to address six unseen bullet points, the first one having two aspects to address. Scenario 1 required candidates to write about their experiences during a stay at the house of an Italian friend, while scenario 2 focused on a visit to a food festival in Italy. Both scenarios proved to be very accessible and gave candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge of Italian. Most candidates chose scenario 1.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue from the context of employability. The monologue (worth 8 marks) was on the topic of CVs and preparing for job interviews. The dialogue (worth 12 marks) focused on summer jobs, including working tasks and conditions. Questions varied in level of demand and were well signposted to help candidates locate answers.

Assignment–writing

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

Performance–talking

The performance–talking provided sufficient opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their skill in this area.

The detailed marking instructions were effective in supporting marking decisions.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed very well in the reading question paper.

The first three questions were 1-mark questions. Most candidates gained the mark in each question, but some mistranslated *negli anni Novanta* (in the nineties) as *1990* and didn't gain the mark in question 1(a).

Questions 4(c) and (d) were worth 3 marks. Candidates performed well in question 4(c), with most gaining the full 3 marks. Question 4(d) proved more challenging and fewer candidates gained all 3 available marks as they did not include enough detail in their answers, namely the words or phrases that are underlined in the marking instructions: he uses the language straight away; they watch cartoons with (Italian) subtitles.

Candidates performed less well in question 5 (the overall purpose question); only some candidates gained the full 2 available marks while others gained 1 mark. Quite a few did not gain any marks in this question, and a few did not attempt it at all. Those who did not do well in this question tended to paraphrase responses that they had already given in previous questions, or lift quotes from the text without translating them or linking them clearly to the question. This had a negative impact as many candidates had written at length but seemed to be less confident about how to approach the question.

In the translation (question 6), most candidates gained at least 5 of the 10 available marks.

Sense unit 1 was completed extremely well. Most candidates who performed less well in this sense unit, mistranslated *scuole superiori* (secondary schools) or omitted the word *circa* (about). Many candidates found sense unit 2 challenging, particularly the phrase *sempre più* (more and more). However, many candidates recognised and translated the future tense successfully in this sense unit. They successfully translated the superlative *la lingua straniera preferita* in sense unit 3. In sense unit 4, some candidates omitted the notion of *solely/only (non solo)*, but this sense unit was otherwise completed very well. The final sense unit was similarly well done, with only a few who mistranslated the superlative or the word *anche* (also).

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates evidenced a high level of performance in the directed writing question paper. The vast majority of candidates opted for scenario 1, which required them to write about their stay with an Italian family. Candidates coped very well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios. A few candidates did not gain marks due to the omission of one or more bullet points. This suggests that candidates were well-prepared in technique for this paper.

Candidates who did less well tended to have difficulty with more basic aspects of grammar, for example gender of nouns, plurals and adjective agreement. Another area that candidates performed less well in was appropriately using the perfect or the imperfect tense in context. This was most evident in the bullet points that required them to describe their accommodation and what they did in their free time.

Many candidates showed a strong knowledge of tenses and included an excellent range in their responses. Markers were particularly impressed with the variety of openers that were used to introduce individual bullet points, and the number of idiomatic expressions used in responses.

It was evident that candidates were well-prepared for the question paper and confident with its requirements. Although few candidates chose scenario 2, performance in this scenario was slightly better than scenario 1.

Question paper 2: Listening

Many candidates performed well in this question paper despite the challenges of the pandemic and the associated difficulty in developing this skill. Both items proved to be accessible to candidates and many engaged well with the topic.

Most questions were worth 1 mark. Questions that proved most challenging were 1(b), 2(b) and (d). Candidates who missed these marks often did not to answer the question fully, usually omitting a key word or phrase that had been underlined as being mandatory in the marking instruction: 1(b) only answer adverts that interest you/correspond to your abilities; 2(b) she doesn't want to stay sitting down all day long; 2(d) play cards with the children. Single words that seemed to be less familiar to candidates were *vestiti comodi* (comfortable clothes), *stare seduta* (stay seated), *I cantanti* (singers), *sorridere* (smile).

Candidates coped well with most of the vocabulary in both items. Markers were particularly impressed with the large number of candidates who performed well in the 2-mark questions, with many gaining full marks.

Performance–talking

Many candidates demonstrated their ability to sustain a wide-ranging discussion appropriate to Higher level. Candidates often dealt successfully with unpredictable elements introduced by the teacher or lecturer.

The overall standard of candidate performance in the sample selected was high and the marks awarded by centres were largely in line with national standards.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are aware there are time constraints and they need to manage the available time successfully
- ◆ know the number of marks available for each question (written in bold)
- ◆ know that, in the reading question paper, the inclusion of line references signpost sections related to specific questions
- ◆ review and discuss marking instructions from past papers to help understand:
 - underlined material that they must include in their responses
 - the notion of optionality, which is available in some questions
 - the division of the translation into sense units, each of which is worth 2 marks
- ◆ are reminded to turn over each page, as a few candidates missed the final question in the listening question paper because they did not do this
- ◆ when preparing for the overall purpose question in the reading question paper:
 - focus on the following principle: make an assertion, then back up this assertion, for example ‘The writer thinks it is worthwhile to learn Chinese because ...’, followed by evidence from the text that illustrates its usefulness. If the candidate quotes an appropriate section of the text as evidence but does not state or paraphrase what the quotation means, they cannot gain the mark
 - take care not to reuse previous answers for which they have already gained marks. It is useful to guide candidates to identify one or two areas of the text from which no marks have been gained, as these areas often contain information that can be useful for the overall purpose question
- ◆ in the translation:
 - know the importance of qualifiers and quantifiers (for example *molto*, *troppo*, *tanto*, *più*, *meno*, *solo*)
 - make good use of their dictionary when required to translate words. Often, the omission or mistranslation of these results in marks being missed
- ◆ discuss and use the marking instruction for directed writing as a useful tool in preparing for this aspect of the exam. Pegged marks and their associated descriptors help candidates to understand features of performance for each pegged mark and what they must include
- ◆ make use of the productive grammar grid in the Higher Modern Languages Course Specification to show the type of language use that is expected at Higher level
- ◆ know that at the start of the each listening item they have 1 minute to read the questions. Candidates should do the same in the reading question paper so that they have a sense of the content of the text

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should continue to make effective use of the performance–talking assessment task, selecting contexts and/or topics which provide scope for candidates to express a range of opinions and ideas and to use detailed and complex 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](#).