



Course Report 2018

Subject	Italian
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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 Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

The question paper performed very well and the subject matter appears to have been accessible to the majority of candidates. All questions performed as expected.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

A good range of marks was achieved in both the listening and discursive writing sections of the question paper. The reaction of candidates to the subject matter of the listening section was largely positive and the full range of discursive writing essay titles was accessed. There were no non-functioning questions.

Component 3 — portfolio

As last year, candidates accessed a range of new texts and topics, and they presented some interesting and well-devised titles. A full spread of marks was awarded, although some pieces were penalised for non-adherence to specifications.

Component 4 — performance

There were a number of very competent performances. Once again, a full range of marks was achieved.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

This year there was some evidence of better performance than usual in the translation question, with fewer instances of mistranslation and/or poor English.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Both items 1 and 2 of the listening section of the question paper were done well, and candidates seem to be comfortable with both the pace and clarity of the recording. There was a significant number of higher pegged marks in discursive writing.

Component 3 — portfolio

The portfolio was generally well done, with a good proportion of higher pegged marks being awarded. Many candidates took great care over presentation, ensuring that bibliographies and notes were well organised and integrated. In many cases, the essay title had been formulated with care in order to ensure adequate depth of treatment, a process also helped by good skill in reconciling sources.

Component 4 — performance

As is normally the case, most candidates were well prepared for the performance. Candidates always seem to rise to the challenge of the performance task, and react for the most part very well to both the presence of a visiting assessor who they don't know, and to the recording process.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

Performance in the standardised overall purpose question was a little disappointing, with few instances of the highest pegged marks being awarded. This seems for the most part to be due to poor time management as there is evidence to suggest that some candidates may rush this part of the paper.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Despite the overall good performance in discursive writing, there are still numerous instances of weaknesses in grammar and spelling, due perhaps to a lack of effective checking and proofreading.

Component 3 — portfolio

Some essay titles were unimaginative and overly generic, leading to a generalised response lacking depth. Management and integration of sources was a problem in a few instances. Bibliographies were sometimes short and vague.

Component 4 — performance

Many candidates relied heavily on pre-learned material, which they then incorporated somewhat excessively into the conversation; the same candidates were then not always able to improvise when questioned more deeply. Some performances lacked depth, and appropriate understanding of critical issues.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates should take care to complete the paper in the order in which it is presented. Many candidates attempt the translation and/or overall purpose question before the comprehension questions. This is not good practice, as addressing the comprehension questions first allows candidates to build up a detailed idea of the content, style and message of the text, which is vital to good performance in the subsequent inferential and translation questions.

Candidates should read the comprehension questions carefully and answer succinctly, without translating large chunks of language; information from the translation section should never be included in these answers.

Enough time should be set aside to address the overall purpose and translation questions effectively, as these aspects are sometimes rushed. In the translation, candidates should also check carefully for accuracy and possible omissions of single words as these often incur a penalty. When answering the overall purpose question, candidates should avoid using large chunks of language lifted from previous marking instructions.

Some candidates need to ensure greater accuracy in answering comprehension questions in order to ensure that the overall level and standard of English is adequate, thus avoiding possible lack of precision.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Effective and thorough proofreading in the discursive writing element is an area in which some candidates could improve, as many basic errors could be avoided by careful checking of verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents.

More detailed and frequent grammar input is recommended in the preparation of candidates for discursive writing, as many of the errors originate from lack of knowledge of these areas.

Component 3 — portfolio

Candidates and centres should ensure that they have fully understood the requirements of the portfolio as outlined in the course assessment specification, as marks are often deducted for non-adherence to these.

Great care should be taken in the selection of essay titles, avoiding those which are contrived, vague, over-ambitious and incapable of being properly addressed within the prescribed word length.

The selection of sources should receive adequate attention and candidates should ensure that content from them is integrated into the essay itself.

Bibliographies should not be limited to the minimum number of entries specified and should be presented in a professional and systematic format.

Essays on literary texts should clearly show that the candidate has read the original in Italian and not the English translation. If possible, centres should try to select literary texts whose intellectual content and length are most suitable for their candidates. New texts and topics are to be welcomed.

Component 4 — performance

Pre-learned material has to be incorporated naturally and candidates need to avoid delivering mini-speeches, as this performance is a test of the ability to generate and sustain an ongoing and unrehearsed conversation.

If a candidate uses notes, then teachers should check to ensure that these are of the prescribed length.

Care should be taken to ensure that topics and texts are recorded succinctly and accurately when submitting STL forms.

Centres should take special care to ensure that recording equipment is properly set up on the day of the visiting assessor's visit. Microphones should be external if possible, as recordings made with integrated microphones are often of poor quality.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	28
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	36
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	83.3%	83.3%	30	140
B	11.1%	94.4%	4	120
C	0.0%	94.4%	0	100
D	2.8%	97.2%	1	90
No award	2.8%	-	1	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional 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 every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.