



Course Report 2016

Subject	Italian
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

The Reading text focused on the context of Society. The passage explored the different types of holidays that young people experience. This was a topic to which candidates related very well. Candidates were required to answer seven questions on the passage in English, with a total of 20 marks. An overall purpose question required candidates to give and justify their opinion of an aspect of the text as a whole.

The text was accessible to all yet was appropriately demanding, with some questions requiring more detailed responses to gain the full marks. The final question required candidates to translate a section of the text, and was worth 10 marks.

Directed Writing

In Directed Writing, candidates were given a choice of two scenarios from the contexts of Learning and Culture. Candidates had to write in Italian, giving specific information from four bullet points. The first bullet point in both scenarios had two parts.

Both scenarios were accessible to candidates and allowed them to use and build upon vocabulary learned at National 5. Candidates were required to use past tenses in the main but had the opportunity to use a range of other tenses.

Component 2: question paper 2 Listening and Writing

The two listening texts came from the context of Employability. The first was a monologue worth 8 marks in which Alessandra spoke about her current job. The second was a dialogue worth 12 marks in which Marco and Chiara discussed the process and difficulties of searching for a job. Candidates were required to answer questions in English on each passage. There was an overall purpose question at the end of Item 1 worth 1 mark.

Following the listening texts, candidates were required to write an essay of 120–150 words in Italian on the topic of work. The two texts provided stimulus for the essay, and further stimulus was given in the essay question, ie *What would be your ideal job? Is it important to earn a lot of money?* These stimuli helped candidates to structure their answers as well as trigger ideas.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Candidates delivered a presentation based on one of the contexts society, learning, employability, or culture. This was followed by a conversation which flowed on naturally from the presentation context but developed into at least one other of the four contexts. The Performance component contains 30 marks in total.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing

Reading was well received by candidates and they engaged with the topic of holidays. The overall purpose question proved more challenging for some candidates. However, the majority managed to give an adequate response.

The Translation section proved to be the most challenging aspect of the paper, but many candidates gave solid responses and performed well. Others grasped the overall sense of the extract but found the units containing more complex grammar harder to put into English. Candidates overall completed the paper within time, and very few questions were omitted.

In Directed Writing most candidates opted for Scenario 2 from the context of Culture, which required them to write about a school group visit to Rome. Both scenarios were accessible to candidates and allowed them to apply and build upon vocabulary learned at National 5 in the holiday/leisure/travel/learning and other topics.

Component 2: question paper 2 Listening and Writing

Candidates were familiar with the vocabulary in both Listening texts, which built on topics at National 5. The Writing was very accessible and candidates made good use of the stimulus provided. There was a much wider range of performance in the writing element compared to other areas, with many more candidates scoring lower pegged marks. There was some evidence of candidates veering off the topic and thus giving a thin response to the question.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing

In Reading some candidates went beyond the minimum requirements by giving additional responses to comprehension questions where there was optionality. Many candidates wrote excellent responses to the overall purpose question that showed good inferential and analytical skills.

In the Translation, many candidates managed the more complex sense units well and coped with the interplay of the perfect and present tenses.

In Directed Writing, many candidates wrote excellent responses that showed a good range and a confident knowledge of tenses.

Component 2: question paper 2 Listening and Writing

Questions 1(a), 1(c), 1(d), 1(e), and 2(a) were answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates. The overall purpose question was particularly well answered.

In Writing, many candidates had prepared generic introductions and/or endings which generally worked well. Some candidates successfully used proverbs and idioms which added extra flair.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

Some candidates mistranslated *sensibile* as 'sensible' rather than 'sensitive' in question 3.

Question 4(b) proved challenging as candidates had to give three details from four to pick up full marks. Some candidates did not provide sufficient detail in their answers. A significant number of candidates thought that 'to escape from school/teachers/mothers' was an adequate response for 3 marks. This type of response gained only one mark.

In Question 6(a), some candidates said that the writer's parents 'wouldn't give her the money', thus misunderstanding the sense that parents **couldn't afford** to pay: *non hanno i soldi da darmi*.

In Question 6(b) *villaggi turistici* was frequently mistranslated as 'tourist villages', which was not sufficient for the mark. Some who opted for the alternative point in cruise ship or luxury hotel omitted the words 'cruise' or 'luxury', which were both required for the mark.

In question 6(d), some candidates misunderstood the meaning of *per qualche ora*, many giving answers such as 'for a couple of hours' or 'for an hour'.

In the overall purpose question, (question 7), most candidates gained at least one mark but some struggled to gain the two marks available. Candidates showed evidence of the ability to extract relevant quotations, but explaining them proved more difficult. A number of candidates expressed a viewpoint but did not justify their viewpoint with an example from the text. Many candidates wrote very lengthy answers which went well beyond what was required. A few candidates did not attempt the overall purpose question.

In the Translation, some candidates encountered difficulty with *il Giappone* which was frequently translated as 'the Japanese' rather than 'Japan'. *Vivace* on some occasions was translated as 'bright' rather than 'lively'. With the phrase *appena tornata* many missed out the notion of having **just** returned. The word *da* was problematic due to its range of meanings. Many lost a mark for the mistranslation of *una periferia* and markers felt that the meaning of the word 'periphery'/'outskirts' was unknown to many candidates in English.

Directed Writing

Most candidates performed well in Directed Writing, but markers noted that quite a number only partially addressed the first bullet point, which has two parts to it. Candidates omitted information about the length of their stay (Scenario 1) or what they thought of the journey (Scenario 2).

Some candidates who opted for Scenario 1 had difficulty in expressing the term 'summer school'.

Generally, candidates showed better control of the *passato prossimo* tense than the imperfect tense. Frequently, the *passato prossimo* was used where the imperfect would have been preferable and in some cases obligatory.

Component 2: question paper 2 Listening and Writing

Listening and Writing

In question 1(b), some candidates did not explain the idea of shifts (*turn*) in their answer.

In question 2(b), some candidates had difficulty translating the word *commercio*.

In question 2(h), many candidates were too general in their answers, writing 'He had to work till late' rather than specifying the time in 'He had to work until 3.30 a.m.'

In the writing element, some candidates produced learned paragraphs or essays with only a hint of relevance to the topic of work. Markers noted that there were many errors in basic grammar, notably in the use of the verb *essere* in all its forms. The use of the present tense was generally weak, and many candidates struggled with adjective agreement, gender and plurals. There was evidence of dictionary misuse, with candidates mistranslating words which have several meanings, and using a noun where a verb form was required, eg the word *l'aiuto* being used where the infinitive form *aiutare* was required.

Candidates who scored within the lower range of pegged marks showed a lack of knowledge of tenses, and essay content tended to be very repetitive.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing

Candidates were well prepared for the Reading paper and it was evident that they had practised skills to enable them to look out for signposts to help locate answers.

Where two or more marks are available in a comprehension question, candidates should be made aware of the added detail required to gain all of the marks. Centres should frequently remind candidates of the jump required from National 5 responses to Higher responses, which will generally be more detailed and thus lengthier.

When training candidates for the overall purpose question, centres could suggest that candidates use the formula 'opinion + evidence'. This would help deter candidates from stating a simple opinion about the passage without showing (from the passage) why they have this opinion. In addition, candidates should be reminded that if they use a quotation from the passage, they need to clearly explain what the quotation means or suggests.

Centres should discourage candidates from doing the translation part of the paper first. Otherwise, candidates do not have the advantage of having a good feel for the passage before attempting to express the sense of the extract to be translated.

In the Directed Writing paper, to ensure that candidates fully address the first bullet point (which contains two parts) centres should encourage candidates to tick off bullet point items as they cover them in the writing process. Centres who are only presenting a few candidates, or whose candidates are following a largely self-study programme, should ensure that candidates have been adequately briefed on the format and requirements of the Directed Writing (and other papers) to deter them from omitting essential bullet points or other information.

It is evident that centres have worked hard to ensure that candidates thoroughly learn the perfect tense. Candidate performance could be enhanced through extra attention to the imperfect tense, particularly regarding repeated (habitual) actions, often required in the third or fourth bullet points, eg 'During my stay in Rome I ate out (*mangiavo fuori*) every evening'.

Component 2: question paper 2 Listening and Writing

Centres should remind candidates to avoid drifting too much into other topic areas and to stick to the topic in question. Although the stimulus questions are only prompts, many candidates would benefit from using these to structure their answer and to ensure a more definite focus for their responses.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	104
------------------------------------	-----

Number of resulted entries in 2016	220
------------------------------------	-----

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	72.3%	72.3%	159	72
B	13.2%	85.5%	29	61
C	9.5%	95.5%	21	50
D	1.8%	96.8%	4	44
No award	3.2%	-	7	0

Decision Making Record Statement:

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.