Course Report 2015

Subject	Italian
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question Papers

Reading: 30 marks

The Reading paper comprised three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). The three Reading texts sampled, in turn, the contexts of Society, Employability and Learning.

The questions (including the overall purpose question) performed as expected with no unforeseen difficulties.

Writing: 20 marks

Task: E-mail application for a job, including information specified in six bullet points, including two unpredictable bullet points. The six bullets were appropriate to the task and the context, and allowed candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

Listening: 20 marks

The Listening monologue and dialogue were based on the context of Culture, with eight marks and 12 marks respectively. Overall, this paper was more demanding than expected. Feedback from some centres highlighted that some candidates found the unfamiliar context of a 'Sagra' —- a local festival — difficult. The topic relates clearly to the *Contexts, topics and topic development* for National 5 (culture and celebrations and events in another country). The vocabulary and structures were appropriate to National 5 level.

Component 2: Performance: Talking

The purpose of the performance is to deliver a presentation and then take part in a natural, spontaneous conversation in Italian from one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture. The performance is worth 30 marks.

Overall, assessors used the pegged marks in the Marking Instructions successfully. The revised Marking Instructions, with more detailed pegged marks descriptors, will be published in due course and will allow for more precision when awarding marks. The revised pegged marks descriptors will also provide more detail on how to assess the Natural Element.

Centres used the required Approach (Presentation/Conversation).

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question papers

Reading
Candidates performed very well in the Reading paper, with very few 'no responses' to a question. There were a number of examples of poor expression and mistranslation, but on the whole candidates gave enough detail to access the marks available.

Writing
Most candidates were able to address the first four bullets in detail, and there was clear evidence of good preparation and ability to remember learned material under exam conditions. Many candidates dealt well with the final two 'unpredictable' bullets, allowing them to access the higher categories of pegged marks. Some candidates, however, were unable to create sufficient written Italian to address the 'unpredictable' bullets in any detail.

Listening
Candidates found the Listening paper more challenging, particularly in the monologue, and many did not give enough detail to access all the marks available.

Candidates appeared to find the dialogue slightly less demanding and many were able to answer the Overall Purpose question correctly.

Component 2: Performance: Talking
The candidates reviewed at verification performed very well. There were no poor performances.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question papers

Reading
Most candidates knew how to identify key information:

Text 1
♦ Question (a) (i): *d'origine americana* — Reality shows started in America
♦ Question (a) (ii): *esistono in quarantadue paesi nel mondo* — exists in 42 countries in the world
♦ Question (b) *la situazione economica, la disoccupazione, ed i problemi ambietal* — the economic situation, unemployment and environmental problems

- ♦ Question (c) (i) *imitare quello che vedono alla televisione* — copy what they see on TV
- ♦ Question (c) (ii) *litigare, gridare e lamentarsi* — to argue, shout and complain

Text 2
- ♦ Question (b) (ii): *un programma personalizzato di esercizi* — a personal/ personalised exercise programme
- ♦ Question (b) (iii): *le capacità e l'età del cliente* — the ability and age of the client
- ♦ Question (c) (i): *sapere motivare la gente* — know how to motivate people

Text 3
- ♦ Question (a): *di tirocinio ed anche di esperienza lavorativa* — apprenticeship/training and also work experience
- ♦ Question (e): lavorare nel settore del volontariato o nelle scuole — voluntary work or in schools
- ♦ Question (g): Overall Purpose — to provide learning and funding opportunities in Italy

Writing

Many candidates were able to show that they had prepared appropriately for this task by writing sentences with good content, accuracy and language resource — in particular with the first four bullets, which would have been practised during the Course.

Listening

Most candidates knew how to identify key information:

- ♦ Question (1) (b): C'erano persone che preparavano da mangiare, persone che mettevano i tavoli in piazza e persone che suonavano, tutti pronti per una notte di divertimento — People who prepared food, who set up tables in the square, played musical instruments and were ready to celebrate/ have fun
- ♦ Question (1) (d): *servono a tavola, e aiutano ad apparecchiare e sparecchiare* — served and helped to set and clear the tables
- ♦ Question (2) (e): *è chiusa, al traffico. Ci sono tavoli con i fiori e la fontana in mezzo alla piazza, è illuminata da luci colorate* — It's closed to traffic. There are tables with flowers and the fountain in the middle of the square is lit up with coloured lights
- ♦ Question (2) (g): Overall Purpose — they raise money for their village

Component 2 Performance: Talking

Candidates performed very well in the Presentation, which is prepared ahead of the assessment. The better performances had evidence of better structure and pronunciation and the ability to use different tenses.

In both the Presentation and the Conversation, candidates who selected topics that allowed them to use detailed language throughout performed well.

Most candidates were well-prepared and many were very accurate in the use of different tenses. There were some examples of very good pronunciation, and a number of candidates showed an ability to go beyond the basics in the conversation element.

There were some examples of very good content both in the presentation and in the conversation.

Most candidates dealt well with the presentation and where there was any hesitation the candidates did recover well.

Some candidates were able to ask for help in the foreign language.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question papers

Reading
Some candidates had difficulty in identifying the precise detail in the following:

Text 2
♦ Question (d) (iii): *vale la pena di avere una formazione specifica – oggi l'esperienza non basta!* — it's worthwhile having specific training — experience is not enough!

Text 3
♦ Question (c): *che vogliono perfezionare la propria conoscenza della lingua italiana* — if you want to perfect your own (knowledge of) Italian
♦ Question (d): *Diverse borse di studio sono disponibili* — Different study grants/funding are available

Writing
Some candidates had difficulty in addressing the two unpredictable bullet points in full, if at all.

Listening
Some candidates had difficulty in identifying the precise detail in the following:

♦ Question (1) (a): *era un'occasione … di festeggiare insieme* — it was an occasion to celebrate together
♦ Question (1) (c): *è il prete che le organizza* — it's the priest who organises them
♦ Question (2) (b): *I miei genitori e i loro amici vanno nei boschi a cercare i funghi* — My parents and their friends go into the woods to look for mushrooms
♦ Question (2) (f): *il ballo tradizionale che si fa l'ultima domenica* — the traditional dance on the last Sunday

Component 2 Performance: Talking

In both the Presentation and the Conversation, candidates who made lists of items (eg school subjects), did not perform as well.

The Conversation was generally less successful than the Presentation, and some candidates were unable to sustain the level of their presentation into the conversation. Some candidates failed to respond well to the questions asked in the conversation, or merely repeated the material used in the presentation.

There was a lack of spontaneity from some candidates who gave very short, unexpanded answers to questions.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

Centres should continue to reiterate the importance of checking over answers, particularly in the Reading papers where the candidates have access to a dictionary. Candidates should be reminded not simply to accept the first entry for a given word but to double-check the meaning in the context of the passage. Candidates should also read over answers to ensure that they make sense in English.

Writing

Dictionary misuse continues to be an issue at this level, particularly when attempting to answer the two unpredictable bullet points. Candidates should also be reminded to attempt all bullet points in order to be able to access the full range of marks available.

Listening

The Listening paper is usually more demanding than the Reading, as candidates do not have access to a dictionary and they do not have access to the source information once the recording has been played. Centres might consider emphasising strategies to overcome this, such as note taking in the foreign language or phonetic equivalents to allow candidates to 'review' the information.

Centres should also prepare candidates for unfamiliar topics, especially those related to the culture of Italy, and remind them to listen out for familiar language in unfamiliar contexts.

Component 2: Performance

Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible. Some conversations sounded excessively rehearsed, and the interlocutor's questions were unvaried from candidate to candidate. There was little sense of spontaneity, but this was almost totally due to the questions asked of candidates. It is recommended that interlocutors ask a range of questions adapted to the responses from, and the ability of, each candidate, rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* available from the CfE section of the SQA website).

Following on from a lesson on a particular topic, an example of sensible preparation towards the conversation could be to invite candidates to think about the type of questions the interlocutor is likely to ask them about this topic. They then could think about the key words in Italian that would be in those questions (eg question words). Candidates could then review the vocabulary studied in the lesson and try and answer those questions. Candidates should also be aware that questions in Italian can be asked in a variety of ways, hence the importance of identifying key words. The teacher/lecturer could help candidates practise understanding questions orally by requiring them to identify key words in a list of random questions he/she speaks out to the class.

During the assessment, the interlocutor could use some of these questions, possibly rephrasing them, and also some unrehearsed questions on this topic as part of a more natural conversation at this level. However, candidates must not know the exact questions and/or their order in advance. This would be detrimental to the natural element of the Conversation.

Candidates should avoid merely giving lists, eg school subjects. This stifles any spontaneity and invariably does not allow the candidate to give extended or developed responses.

Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the Presentation and the Conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	231

Number of resulted entries in 2015	203

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	70.0%	70.0%	142	70
B	17.2%	87.2%	35	60
C	7.4%	94.6%	15	50
D	2.0%	96.6%	4	45
No award	3.4%	-	7	-

For this Course, the intention was to set an assessment with grade boundaries at the notional value of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. The examination provided an appropriate level of challenge to candidates. A slightly higher degree of accessibility in the Reading component was counter-balanced by a slightly greater challenge in the Listening component. For this reason, grade boundaries remain unchanged and no adjustment was required.