



Course Report 2018

Subject	Italian
Level	National 5

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 1: Reading

The reading question paper consisted of three texts increasing in difficulty and of equal weight (10 marks for each item). The three reading texts sampled the contexts of society, culture and learning.

The question paper performed in line with expectations, and feedback from markers suggested that it was fair in terms of course coverage, and the level of demand was appropriate to National 5.

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

The writing question paper required candidates to write an e-mail application for the role of a babysitter. Candidates were required to include information specified in the six bullet points, including the two unpredictable bullet points. The unpredictable bullet points required candidates to state why it is important to learn a foreign language and to ask for further information about the job. These were relevant to the context and allowed candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

Candidates were able to access the full range of marks available.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

The listening monologue and dialogue were based on the context of employability with 8 marks for item 1, and 12 marks for item 2. In item 1, Cristina spoke about her part-time job and, in item 2, Silvia and Angelo discussed Silvia's part-time job.

Overall, this paper performed as intended. The marking team found the paper to be fair and appropriately challenging for the level.

Component 4: assignment–writing

In line with the course specification requirements, candidates submitted a piece of writing in Italian focusing on a context of society, culture or learning.

The assignment–writing was a new element of the course assessment this year and candidates performed well, with the majority of candidates achieving 12 marks or more.

The grade boundaries for C and A were raised by 2 marks as a result of increased accessibility evidenced in relation to the new assignment – writing in its introductory year. Such adjustment enables the national standard to be maintained from year to year.

Component 5: performance–talking

The centres that were verified for the performance–talking, had used the performance–talking assessment task for Modern Languages to assess candidates effectively.

The performance–talking assessment task has been amended in 2018, to include a conversation in Italian from at least two of the following contexts: society, learning, employability or culture. The new requirement to cover two contexts ensures good practice, which had previously been a recommendation only.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates identified information correctly as follows:

Text 1

Question (a): *La mamma può essere anche la tua amica?* — ‘Can your mum also be your friend?’

Question (b): *è molto meglio* — ‘is better’

Text 2

Question (a): *non è solo un modo di passare le vacanze* — ‘a way to spend holidays’; *è un modo di vivere la vita* — ‘it’s a way of life’

Text 3

Question (a)(ii): *nel mondo di commercio* — ‘in the world of business/trade/commerce’

Question (e): *guadagnare un buono stipendio* — ‘to earn a good salary’

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had prepared appropriately for this question paper by writing sentences with good content, accuracy and language resource. They did this particularly well in the first four bullets, which may have been practised during the course. In addition, most candidates attempted both unpredictable bullet points.

All candidates attempted this section of the question paper, and most candidates achieved 12 marks or more from the 20 marks available.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

Most candidates identified information correctly as follows:

Item 1

Question (a): *quattro giorni alla settimana* — ‘4 days a week’

Question (c): *mi aiuterebbe a rilassarmi e a guadagnare un po’ di soldi* — ‘allows me to relax and earn some money’

Item 2

Question (b)(ii): *è impossibile parcheggiare la macchina* — ‘it’s impossible to park the car’

Component 4: assignment–writing

Overall, candidates performed very well in the new assignment–writing.

A good range of topics was evident from the specified contexts of society, culture and learning, with many candidates opting to write about their school, holidays or family relationships.

Component 5: performance–talking

In the performances verified in 2018, candidates had responded well to supportive interlocutors. Most had taken the opportunity to demonstrate the use of detailed language and a wide range of verb forms and other language features.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

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

Text 1

Question (c): *vuol sapere tutto che faccio* — ‘wants to know everything I do’. Some candidates had difficulty with this structure and stated that she knew/knows everything about her.

Question (d): *mi lascia tranquilla* — ‘leaves me in peace/alone’. Some candidates misunderstood this to mean that she is quiet.

Text 2

Question (b)(ii): *è migliore per chi ha maggiore esperienza* — ‘it’s better for experienced surfers’.

Text 3

Question (d): *sono andati per la strada* — ‘they went out in the streets’. Some pupils were unfamiliar with this expression in Italian and therefore could not achieve the full 3 marks.

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

Overall, candidates performed well in this section of the question paper.

In some cases, candidates had difficulty in addressing the unpredictable bullet points in a full and balanced manner. As such, this was the area where instances of dictionary misuse and an inability to manipulate verbs was most evident.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

The following are questions which candidates found challenging:

Item 1

Question (e): *devo stare nell’acqua con i bambini* — ‘I have to be in the water with the children’. Some candidates had difficulty in communicating that she had to be in the water and not just watching them in the water.

Item 2

Question (a)(ii): *ero un po’ ansiosa perché tutto era nuovo e c’erano tante cose da imparare* — ‘I was a bit anxious as everything was new and there were lots of things to learn’.

Question (c)(ii): *devo pulire il bagno* — ‘I have to clean the toilet’.

Question (f)(i): *fare un anno sabbatico* — ‘to do a gap year’. Some candidates were unfamiliar with this expression.

Component 4: assignment–writing

On the whole, the assignment was completed with a high degree of accuracy and detailed language appropriate to National 5.

Candidates who achieved less than 12 marks often wrote lists, and the language resource was weak for the level. Markers noted that this was particularly true where candidates had chosen to write about their school and did not go beyond basic structures in order to demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of the language.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading

Candidates should be encouraged to allocate enough time for checking over their answers, and ensuring their answers in English are clear and make sense. Candidates risk losing marks for poor expression.

Component 2: question paper 1: Writing

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to attempt all of the six bullet points in order to access the full range of marks available.

Where using learned material for the first four bullet points, candidates should check spelling carefully, and ensure basic information such as age and numbers are accurate.

Overall, centres are preparing candidates well for this assessment.

Component 3: question paper 2: Listening

Listening continues to be the area which candidates find most challenging. Centres might consider emphasising strategies to overcome this, for example note-taking in the foreign language, or using phonetic equivalents to allow candidates to review the information.

Cognates are used frequently in the listening question paper, and centres should continue to prepare the candidates to understand these in unfamiliar contexts and expressions. At National 5 candidates are expected to answer in detail, including qualifiers.

Component 4: assignment–writing

In its first year, the assignment–writing has been tackled with a high degree of success and centres have clearly prepared students well by using correction codes and reference materials to support candidates.

Centres should support candidates in choosing a topic that enables them to produce detailed language with a range of structures, opinions and reasons.

Simple listing of nouns should be limited or avoided at National 5.

Component 5: performance–talking

Candidates should be reminded that they have to cover two contexts as described within the National 5 course specification as well as effectively sustaining the conversation.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	241
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	286
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	49.7%	49.7%	142	86
B	19.6%	69.2%	56	74
C	17.5%	86.7%	50	62
D	8.7%	95.5%	25	50
No award	4.5%	-	13	-

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.