Course report 2023

Advanced Higher Italian

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. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022:   33

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   19

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	12	Percentage	63.2	Cumulative percentage	63.2	Minimum mark required	138
B	Number of candidates	0	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	63.2	Minimum mark required	118
C	Number of candidates	5	Percentage	26.3	Cumulative percentage	89.5	Minimum mark required	98
D	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	5.3	Cumulative percentage	94.7	Minimum mark required	78
No award	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	5.3	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

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 and information page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The topic of the question paper was home schooling and the reasons why a family in Italy might opt for this type of education for their children. The topic was relevant and accessible, and most candidates performed very well.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The question paper performed as expected and was accessible to all candidates. Candidates gained a range of marks in line with the expected demand of the paper, and this was evident in both the listening and discursive writing sections. Candidates seemed to relate well to the topic of the listening section. All questions performed as expected in the listening question paper with only a few candidates mistranslating false cognates and missed out on marks. In the discursive writing section, all essay titles were attempted and often with success.

Portfolio

Candidates produced essays on familiar texts, and most were based on a well-selected essay title; however, some titles proved to be less satisfactory, and did not allow those candidates to produce an essay that was sufficiently analytical. A full range of marks was awarded.

Performance–talking

Performance levels have been stable in this element of course assessment for a number of years.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Overall, the comprehension questions were well done. Many candidates found the translation to be straightforward.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, both parts were well done, and candidates seemed to engage well with the topic of the discussion. Some candidates achieved the highest pegged marks in discursive writing.

Portfolio

Most portfolio essays had good content. There were some excellent essays, mostly in response to carefully selected titles, demonstrating a good level of analysis. However, where the essay title did not allow sufficient analysis or opportunities to promote discursive elements, candidates tended to do less well.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed very well, as a result of excellent preparation, and most interacted very well with the visiting assessor.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

As in previous years, candidates did not perform as well in the overall purpose question in the reading section. This is possibly due to a small number of candidates running out of time as they attempted this question last. Candidates would benefit from better time management in this question paper. Some candidates missed out on marks in the 7-mark inference question as they summed up the text rather than analysing the language and style of the article. The translation section of the paper was straightforward with only some candidates mistranslating verb tenses.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the discursive writing section, some candidates did not achieve the higher pegged marks. This was often due to a lack of accuracy and less evidence of confident language resource elements.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ complete the questions in the paper in the order they are presented. Many candidates attempt the translation and/or overall purpose question before the comprehension questions. This is not good practice as completing 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 a good performance in the overall purpose and translation questions

♦ read all comprehension questions carefully and answer succinctly, without translating large chunks of language

♦ do not include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers

♦ allocate sufficient time to attempting the overall purpose and translation questions in the translation, check carefully for accuracy and omissions of single words

♦ pay attention to accuracy of tense

♦ are careful of their expression in English to avoid lack of precision and possible misinterpretation

♦ for the overall purpose question, quote from the text to support their argument

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ have a good knowledge and understanding of the Italian number system. Marks may be missed in item1 of the listening question paper through misunderstanding, for example any statistics cited, which is a common feature of this item

♦ allow time during the exam to proofread their discursive writing essay

♦ avoid basic errors by carefully checking verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents

♦ receive more detailed and frequent grammar input and practice to help them prepare. Many errors originate from lack of knowledge in these aspects

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ fully understand the requirements of the portfolio as detailed in the course specification

♦ take care in the selection of essay titles, avoiding those which are too contrived, vague, or over-ambitious within the prescribed word count. Teachers and lecturers should discuss possible titles with candidates and give appropriate advice where required

♦ are aware the selection of sources is important, and these should be fully discussed

♦ use a second source in Italian in the portfolio and in the bibliography

- complete bibliographies that are as comprehensive as possible, citing all sources
- that write essays on literary texts, clearly show that the candidate has read the original in Italian and not the English translation
- are supported to select literary texts with intellectual content that is most suitable for them

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- incorporate pre-learned material effectively and avoid delivering partially rehearsed material
- generate and sustain a conversation
- when using notes, check to ensure that these are of the prescribed length
- note their topics and texts succinctly and accurately when submitting candidate STL forms. Sometimes too many topics are given and this results in visiting assessors having to pick and choose due to time restraints, which is not always to the benefit of the candidate

Appendix: 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 was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

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 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. 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 the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 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 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report.