



Course report 2023

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: 170

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 217

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	175	Percentage	80.6	Cumulative percentage	80.6	Minimum mark required	82
B	Number of candidates	14	Percentage	6.5	Cumulative percentage	87.1	Minimum mark required	70
C	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	3.7	Cumulative percentage	90.8	Minimum mark required	58
D	Number of candidates	9	Percentage	4.1	Cumulative percentage	94.9	Minimum mark required	46
No award	Number of candidates	11	Percentage	5.1	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 1: Reading

The reading question paper was on the context of culture. The text explored the topic of spending a term or a year abroad. The topic was very relevant to candidates.

The paper included a range of 1, 2 and 3-mark questions which were balanced in terms of higher, lower and average levels of demand. The range of accessible and more challenging questions, particularly the overall purpose question and the translation, helped differentiate candidate performance in line with expectations. Questions were well signposted to help candidates locate answers.

The overall purpose question (question 7) assessed candidates' inferential skills, requiring them to discuss whether the writer's view of spending a year abroad was positive, using evidence from the text.

The translation (question 6) consisted of five sense units. Each unit contained an element of challenge, from the more straightforward to more complex aspects of grammar, such as idiomatic expression or the correct identification of present, perfect and imperfect tense.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper offered candidates a choice of two scenarios on the contexts of society and employability. Candidates had to address six unseen bullet points, the first one having two aspects to address.

Scenario 1 required candidates to write about their experiences during a stay with an Italian friend, while scenario 2 focused on work experience in a restaurant in Italy.

Both scenarios proved to be very accessible and gave candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge of Italian. Most candidates chose scenario 1.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue on the context of learning. The monologue (worth 8 marks) was on the topic of how school prepares for experiences after school. The dialogue (worth 12 marks) focused on studying at university and exams.

Both items were relevant to young people's current and/or future experiences of learning, and candidates attempted these well. Questions varied in level of demand and were well signposted to help candidates locate answers.

Assignment-writing

The requirement to complete the assignment-writing was removed for session 2022-23.

Performance–talking

Overall, candidates performed very well. Centres sampled for Higher Italian used the coursework assessment task effectively, and the quality of the performances sampled was very good.

The topics selected gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate a range of structures, vocabulary and tenses appropriate to the level and this gave candidates the opportunity to access the higher pegged marks.

Interlocutors used open-ended questions effectively, giving candidates the opportunity to use detailed and complex language.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper. Most answers were very clearly signposted, and most candidates were able to locate the relevant text.

Most candidates gained marks for straightforward questions, for example questions 1(a), 4(c) and 5(a). Most achieved at least 1 mark in questions worth 2 marks or more (questions 3, 4(b), (e) and 6). Many candidates understood *come se fosse l'ultimo* (as if it were the last). However, some candidates failed to gain full marks in these questions as they did not write sufficient detail in their answers. In some cases, candidates were able to locate the answer in the Italian text, but they could not express the meaning in English, and they did not gain the marks, for example questions 4(a) and 5(a).

The overall purpose question (question 7) was answered more consistently than in previous years but was challenging for many candidates. A few candidates quoted in Italian from the text without translation or explanation. Some candidates gave their answers to the comprehension questions as their only justification and did not gain the marks. Some candidates wrote overly long answers to this question, and a few candidates gained no marks despite this.

The text for translation contained both straightforward and more challenging structures and many candidates gained at least 7 of the available 10 marks. A few candidates paraphrased the translation, and a few gave contradictory alternatives. Sense unit 1 was completed well. Some candidates found sense unit 2 challenging and missed out either *veramente* (really) or *molto* (very). Sense unit 3 was translated well with only a few candidates missing out a translation for *non...più* (no longer). Only a few candidates did not translate sense unit 4 correctly due to a lack of familiarity with English idiomatic expression. Many found sense unit 5 very challenging and mistranslated the tense or the phrase *cogliere quest'occasione* (seize this opportunity).

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates evidenced a high level of performance in the directed writing question paper. Both scenarios gave candidates a good choice with variety of vocabulary and opportunities for additional detail. Most candidates opted for scenario 1, which required them to write about their stay with an Italian friend and included celebrations for the friend's birthday. Candidates coped very well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios. A few candidates did not gain marks due to the omission of one or more bullet points, but most candidates were able to address all bullet points. This suggests that candidates were well-prepared in technique for this paper. On the whole candidates addressed both scenarios well and in a full and balanced way.

Candidates who did less well tended to have difficulty with verb conjugation as well as with more basic aspects of grammar, for example gender of nouns, plurals and adjective agreement. In scenario 1, some candidates were unable to express 'my friend's birthday' or 'my friend's family'. In scenario 2, a few candidates answered the final bullet point with a

recommendation to others for this type of experience, rather than saying whether or not they would like to work in another country in the future.

The final bullet point in both scenarios proved challenging for some candidates who had insufficient control of the future (scenario 1) or conditional (scenario 2) tenses.

Many candidates included a good range of tenses and idiomatic expressions in their writing.

Question paper 2: Listening

Many candidates performed well throughout this question paper.

Questions that candidates found most challenging were 1(c), 2(c)(iii) and (d). Candidates who missed marks in these questions, and elsewhere, did not answer with enough detail.

For question 1(d)(ii), many candidates understood *la possibilità di mettere in pratica ciò che ho imparato a scuola* (the possibility of putting what I learned at school into practice) although ways of expressing it varied.

In question 1(c), some candidates did not understand *frontiera* (border) and mistranslated *cittadini* as 'cities' instead of 'citizens'.

In question 1(d)(i) some candidates were not familiar with *fabbrica* (factory) giving instead 'farm', 'shop' or 'car shop'.

In question 2(g), many candidates did not demonstrate understanding of *cavarsela* (to manage/cope) but there was extra optionality here for candidates to gain the mark.

On the whole, candidates coped well with the challenges of the listening paper and performance was stronger than in previous years.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well-prepared for this assessment task and performed to a very high standard.

Some candidates did not perform well because of problems with grammatical accuracy, intonation and pronunciation.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates:

- ◆ are aware of the need to manage the available time effectively
- ◆ know that at the start of each listening item they have 1 minute to read the questions. Candidates should do the same in the reading question paper so that they have a sense of the content of the text
- ◆ know the number of marks available for each question (written in bold) and provide two or three distinct answers where a question is worth 2 or 3 marks
- ◆ give as much detail as they can in answer to listening and reading questions including qualifiers and quantifiers
- ◆ review listening and reading marking instructions from past papers to help understand:
 - underlined material that they must include in their responses
 - the notion of optionality, which is flagged by, for example, ‘State **any one** thing’
 - the division of the translation into sense units, each of which is worth 2 marks
- ◆ are reminded to turn over each page, as a few candidates missed the final question in the listening question paper because they did not do this
- ◆ in the overall purpose question of the reading paper:
 - know that the evidence to support their assertion must not come from the answers to the comprehension questions
 - know to identify one or two areas of the text from which no marks have been gained as these can often be used in support of an assertion
 - are aware that if they quote an appropriate section of the text as evidence but do not state or paraphrase what the quotation means, they cannot gain the mark
 - do not write excessively in response to this question. This could lead to not having enough time for the translation question
- ◆ in the translation section of the reading paper:
 - know the importance of qualifiers and quantifiers, for example *molto*, *tante*, *veramente*
 - are aware that accuracy plays a very important role in this question and that incorrect verb tenses will not gain marks in the sense unit
 - re-read each sense unit to make sure they have translated every word
- ◆ in the directed writing paper:
 - are aware of the requirement to provide an equal and balanced response to each bullet point
 - read the scenarios and the bullet points carefully and make sure they address all information required
 - use the marking instructions as a useful tool in preparing for this aspect of the exam
 - make use of the productive grammar grid in the Higher Modern Languages Course Specification as a guide to the type of language use that is expected at Higher level
- ◆ in the performance–talking:
 - have opportunities to express a wide range of ideas and opinions, and to demonstrate detailed and complex language

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](#).