



Course report 2025

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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 46

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 26

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	19	73.1	73.1	140
B	4	15.4	88.5	120
C	2	7.7	96.2	100
D	0	0	96.2	80
No award	1	3.8	100	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

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

In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 70%
- 'many' means 50% to 69%
- 'some' means 25% to 49%
- 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation paper performed as expected. The level of demand was appropriate for the level and was accessible to a range of abilities. Candidates engaged well with the topic of taking a family gap year and learning through travel. The overall purpose question, which requires candidates to analyse the writer's techniques and intentions, proved more challenging for candidates. The translation provided appropriate challenge, and most candidates coped well in this section.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening and discursive writing paper performed as expected. Candidates connected well with the range of topics. Item 1 explored the use of technology in schools. Item 2 focused on the advantages and disadvantages of using technology in the classroom from the point of view of both the learner and the teacher. The discursive writing section was more challenging for candidates. All four essay titles were attempted. The most popular choice was on the topic of whether a degree is essential for success nowadays.

Portfolio

Most candidates did well in the portfolio. Candidates mainly chose well-known texts but some chose more uncommon texts. Niccolò Ammaniti's *Io Non Ho Paura* was a very popular choice. Elena Ferrante's *L'Amica Geniale* was popular. A few candidates chose older texts, such as Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* and the poems of Francesco Petrarca. A few candidates took a more social-historical approach to their portfolio. The full range of pegged marks was awarded.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as intended.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- questions 1(b), 2(a), 3(a) and (b), and 4(b): most candidates answered these well
- question 6, the overall purpose question: a few candidates demonstrated an excellent degree of inferential reading and pinpointed the writer's techniques and intentions clearly. They quoted or paraphrased appropriately from the passage, and backed up their selections with explanations
- question 7, the translation: most candidates coped well with the change of tenses and managed to produce a paragraph that flowed well. A few candidates demonstrated excellent idiomatic English, which added flair to their translation

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section:

- most candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of vocabulary in the context of learning and the impact of technology in the classroom
- item 1, questions 1(a), d(i) and d(ii): most candidates answered very well
- item 2, questions 2(a), (b), (d)(i) and (d)(ii): most candidates did well, and benefitted from some optionality in these questions

In the discursive writing section:

- a few candidates produced outstanding essays that demonstrated a high degree of accuracy in grammar and the ability to consider different viewpoints before coming to an appropriate conclusion
- a few candidates used a range of openers to introduce sentences and varied the subordinating conjunctions (*perché, dunque, a causa di, grazie a, benché, nonostante che*), which complemented both the structure and content of their essay

Portfolio

A few candidates gained the upper pegged marks by demonstrating a good degree of analysis in their responses and used a clear and focused title that was more conducive to analysis, for example 'Explore the ways in which Niccolò Ammaniti uses Michele to explore the theme of friendship', 'To what extent does poverty dictate events in *Io Non Ho Paura?*'. Many stronger portfolios included appropriate quotations from their chosen text(s), film(s) or accompanying critique, which they used to explain or link to aspects of the themes or essay title.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed very well and used a range of sophisticated language. Many candidates had researched their chosen topics and were well prepared with a high level of accuracy. The most popular topics for discussion were immigration, social media and aspects of employability.

Many candidates gave very strong responses to questions on their portfolio. Candidates engaged well with the visiting assessor, and most were able to sustain a conversation that allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge of a wide range of verbs, vocabulary, structures and tense. All candidates managed to sustain the conversation for the full 20 minutes.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- question 1(a): some candidates found it difficult to translate the present continuous expression *imparare viaggiando*. Many candidates wrote variations on 'learning how to travel' instead of 'learning through travel'
- question 6, the overall purpose question:
 - many candidates did not perform well. They made valid statements about the text but did not back these up with evidence from the passage
 - many candidates reused information that had already generated marks in previous questions
 - most candidates did not refer to features of language such as tone, word choice, repetition, rhetorical questioning
 - many candidates did not comment on the writer's use of journalistic or persuasive techniques, for example the use of formal or statistical language or eyewitness or personal accounts
- question 7, the translation:
 - some candidates did not understand the notion of 'more and more' in the expression *sempre più* and mistranslated this
 - some candidates found it difficult to translate *in lungo e in largo* (far and wide) and *una casa a quattro ruote* (a house on four wheels)
 - some candidates did not recognise the change of tense from present to imperfect in line 47, or from the imperfect to the conditional tense in the last sentence in line 49

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, questions 2(e) and (h): most candidates recognised the cognates, but some did not answer the questions fully and missed required detail that was underlined in the marking scheme, for example:

- *...come usare questo strumento ormai indispensabile*
- *l'importanza dell'interazione sociale perché la comunicazione faccia a faccia tra studenti rimane l'obiettivo principale della scuola*

In the discursive writing:

- some candidates did not present a range of viewpoints and gave a one-sided and brief response
- some candidates gave a range of viewpoints but did not come to a conclusion
- a few candidates used language throughout their essay that, although accurate, was not complex enough for Advanced Higher level

Portfolio

- some candidates did not take a critical or analytical approach to their portfolio and simply summarised the plot of their chosen book or film
- some candidates used the first person where they should have used an objective third person approach
- a few candidates did not include an appropriate additional source in Italian and could only achieve a maximum of 15 marks

Performance–talking

- a few candidates Subject Topic List (STL) was too long and made it difficult to give more focused responses
- a few candidates gave short responses to some questions and did not expand enough to demonstrate their range of language
- a few candidates used language which, although accurate, was not complex enough for Advanced Higher level

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- read the comprehension questions before reading the actual passage to gain a good feel for the topic and help them grasp the gist of the content
- take note of line references and lift their responses from the appropriate section of the passage
- do not include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers
- do the overall purpose question and the translation after they have done the comprehension questions. In this way, candidates gain a feel for the passage and a sense of its purpose and significance
- practise past papers for reading and translation and become familiar with how long to spend on each of the translation, overall purpose and comprehension questions
- for the overall purpose question, recognise key features of persuasive writing that writers often use, for example:
 - the use of statistics or data to back up their viewpoint
 - reference to an expert, scientist, professor or eyewitness who backs up their viewpoint
 - use of exaggeration or varying tone to emphasise the extent of, for example, their outrage and/or sympathy
 - use of, for example, rhetorical questions, exclamation marks, repetition, lists
- look out for modifiers, qualifiers, quantifiers, comparatives and superlatives, especially in the translation, for example *più di* (more than), *troppo* (too)

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- revise basic vocabulary which often comes up in listening passages, for example numbers, days, months and times
- listen for signposts and key words in the listening passages that help locate the answers
- make full use of [SQA's Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page](#), including marking instructions, past papers and course reports to know what they must include to gain the upper pegged marks in the discursive writing. In particular, candidates should know the need to consider both sides of an argument and come to an appropriate conclusion
- incorporate learned material where appropriate in the discursive writing
- use the productive grammar grid in appendix 2 of the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to help gauge the complexity of language expected at Advanced Higher level

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- are aware of the requirements of the portfolio, particularly candidates who are self-taught or who have minimum contact with a teacher or lecturer
- choose a title that is focused and specific and gives them opportunities to analyse. Titles, for example 'To what extent does the writer explore the theme of loss, love, poverty, betrayal (one of these) through the main character or the setting (one of these)' are focused and often successful
- are fully aware of the requirement to use a second source in Italian in their portfolio and in their bibliography
- who base their portfolio on literary texts, read the original text in Italian

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- frequently revise the basics of articles, plurals, adjective endings and present and other tense patterns
- complete their Subject Topic List (STL) forms appropriately and ensure that they are focused and not too long
- practise speaking in Italian in pairs, or in groups, from the start of the course to increase their confidence in initiating discussion as well as responding to questions
- develop a bank of set phrases that they can use in any discussion, for example a list of openers: *A mio parere, si dice che, è vero che, oggi giorno...*
- develop a bank of subordinating conjunctions that help to extend responses, for example *perché, dunque, a causa di, grazie a, benché, nonostante che...*
- listen to as much Italian as possible, and as early as possible, to ensure they have the best chance of success

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim 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, we hold 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 our 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. We 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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).