



Course report 2025

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.

For information about the performance–talking, which is internally assessed, please refer to the 2024–25 Qualification Verification Summary Report on the [subject page](#) of our website.

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: 189

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 252

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	175	69.4	69.4	84
B	30	11.9	81.3	72
C	26	10.3	91.7	60
D	10	4.0	95.6	48
No award	11	4.4	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 1: Reading

The reading question paper was based on the context of society. The text was about the issue of smoking, and the topic was relevant to candidates.

The paper included a range of 1, 2 and 3-mark questions that 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.

The overall purpose question (question 6) tested candidates' inferential skills, requiring them to discuss to what extent the writer put forward a negative view of smoking, using evidence from the text.

The translation (question 7) was made up of five sense units. Each sense unit contained an element of challenge, from the more straightforward to more complex aspects of grammar, for example the correct identification of perfect and present tenses including a subjunctive.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper offered candidates a choice of two scenarios based on the contexts of employability and learning. In scenario 1 (employability), candidates had to write about their experiences working in a shop in Italy, while in scenario 2 (learning) they had to write about attending a language course in Italy.

The scenarios were chosen by an equal number of candidates. Both scenarios were very accessible and gave candidates opportunities to show their knowledge of Italian.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue based on the context of culture. The monologue was on the topic of house swapping for holiday accommodation. The dialogue focused on holiday plans.

Both items were relevant to young people's current and or future experiences and understanding of Italian life. Questions varied in level of demand and were well-signposted to help candidates locate answers.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as intended, allowing candidates the opportunity to use detailed and complex language.

Candidates used a variety of topics from the contexts of society, learning, employability, culture.

The assignment offered candidates an element of personalisation and choice and provided scope for them to write on a topic of personal knowledge or interest.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates performed well in the reading question paper. Their answers were very clearly signposted, and they could find the relevant text.

- question 1: a few candidates did not write the correct number (900,000) or give the extra detail (more than) and did not gain the first of the 2 marks
- questions 2(a), (b), (c), 3, 4 and 5(a): most candidates gained at least 1 mark in these questions
- questions 1 and 3: most candidates gained the marks in these straightforward questions
- questions 2(b) and 5(c): some candidates did not gain full marks as they did not give enough detail
- questions 5(a) and (b): most candidates gained full marks
- question 6, the overall purpose question: this was answered more inconsistently than last year, possibly due to the wording of the question being 'to what extent' rather than a consideration of positive and negative points
 - a few candidates quoted in Italian from the text without translation or explanation
 - some candidates wrote at length without addressing the question or repeated answers given previously to comprehension questions, and did not gain the marks
 - good answers summarised two or more points from the text to show understanding of the text as a whole, or referenced the last two lines of the text, the title, the author's word choice or choice of people giving their viewpoint

- question 7, the translation: the text contained both straightforward and more challenging structures. Most candidates completed the translation well and most demonstrated good awareness of tense:
 - a few candidates paraphrased the translation, and a few gave conflicting alternatives
 - some candidates added or missed out words
 - some mistranslated a common irregular verb *sono diventate* (in this context 'have become') as 'are becoming' and this led to errors with tense
 - most candidates translated sense unit 2 well, including the subjunctive *sia*; however, a few candidates mistranslated *malsana* (unhealthy) as 'bad'
 - sense unit 5 was completed well

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Most candidates demonstrated a high level of performance in the directed writing question paper. Both scenarios had a good variety of vocabulary, and opportunities for candidates to provide more detail.

Many candidates coped well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios.

A few candidates missed out on marks as they did not address one or more bullet points, but most candidates were able to address all bullet points in a full and balanced way. This suggests that candidates prepared well for this paper.

A few stronger candidates did not cover the bullet points fully (sometimes covering two bullet points in a single sentence) and they could not access the highest pegged mark. However, most candidates addressed their chosen scenario well. Features of stronger performances included complex language such as *chi lavora da casa ha...*, *ne è valsa la pena*, *il che mi ha reso felice*.

Many candidates who did less well had difficulty with verb conjugation. Some candidates had difficulty with possessives, and there was a lack of adjective agreement in weaker performances. The last bullet point in both scenarios was covered well by most candidates this year. Many candidates included a good range of verbs and idiomatic expressions in their writing and showed control of perfect and imperfect tenses.

Question paper 2: Listening

Many candidates performed well in this question paper and did very well in:

- questions 1(d) and (f)
- questions with extra optionality, such as 2(b) and (c)
- questions with more than 1 mark, such as 2(d)(i) and (e)

Questions that candidates found challenging were:

- questions requiring specific detail, such as 2(d)(iii) and (f)
- question 1(e): some candidates misunderstood or did not hear the word *noleggiare* (to hire/rent)
- questions 1(a) and 2(d)(ii): a few candidates wrote the wrong number

Assignment–writing

Many candidates coped well with the requirement to structure their writing, to provide different viewpoints and to draw conclusions. Many candidates used detailed and complex language and a wide range of tenses and structures. Most assignments showed a good level of accuracy, and there was more clear evidence of structure and use of discursive and organisational language throughout. Good examples of this were: *è opinione comune che...*, *sarei bugiardo se dicesse che...*, *nonostante ciò, detto questo*.

A few essay titles did not give candidates enough opportunity to write a balanced argument or to draw a conclusion. Some candidates had difficulty keeping their assignment relevant to the title. A few candidates did not provide a title, making relevance difficult to evaluate. Very few candidates this year wrote the assignment using a dictionary or wordlist without conjugating verbs.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Listening and reading question papers

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- have a solid grasp of numbers in Italian and of qualifiers for these, for example *più di*
- know that before each listening item, they have 1 minute to read the questions. They should do the same in the reading question paper to gain a sense of the content of the text
- give as much detail as they can in their answers to the questions, including qualifiers and quantifiers
- review the marking instructions from past papers to help understand:
 - material given in bold, which they must include in their answers
 - the notion of optionality, for example 'State any one thing'

Question paper 1: Reading

For the overall purpose question, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- do not use their answers to the comprehension questions as evidence to support their assertion
- identify one or two areas of the text where 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

For the translation question, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- are aware that accuracy plays a very important role in this question and that incorrect verb tenses and adjectives do not gain marks
- re-read each sense unit to make sure they have translated every word, and it makes sense
- review the marking instructions from past papers to help understand the division of the translation into sense units, each worth 2 marks

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- provide a balanced response to each bullet point
- know that for the first bullet point, they have to address two pieces of information
- read the scenarios and the bullet points carefully and make sure they give all the required information
- use a variety of tenses and structures to achieve the higher pegged marks
- use the marking instructions to help prepare for this question paper
- 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
- know they must address each bullet point. If three or more of the bullet points are not addressed, the mark awarded would be 0, as detailed in the marking instructions

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- know that there are specific marking instructions for the assignment–writing, and that they should use these separately from the marking instructions for directed writing
- structure their writing
- provide different arguments or viewpoints
- provide a title that prompts a discursive essay
- use the marking instructions to help prepare for this question paper
- view examples of discursive writing on [SQA's Understanding Standards web page](#) to better understand the style of writing required for the assignment–writing
- have a choice of stimuli at the start of the drafting process to help them write discursively about a topic
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen

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](#).