

Course report 2026

Higher Italian, SCQF level 6

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question papers and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We carried out limited verification for performance–talking this year, so we won't publish a verification summary. You can find summaries from previous years on our [website](#).

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 252

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 216

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	151	69.9	69.9	84
B	33	15.3	85.2	72
C	16	7.4	92.6	60
D	11	5.1	97.7	48
No award	5	2.3	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper 1: Reading

This question paper performed as intended. The paper was on the context of society. The text was about the decline of marriage in Italy, 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 challenging questions, particularly the overall purpose question and the translation, helped differentiate candidate performance.

The overall purpose question (question 7) tested candidates' inferential skills. They had to discuss to what extent the writer put forward a negative view of marriage, using evidence from the text.

The translation (question 8) was made up of five sense units. Each sense unit had straightforward to complex aspects of grammar that candidates had to identify, for example the perfect and present tenses as well as a subjunctive.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

This question paper performed as intended. Candidates had a choice of two scenarios based on the contexts of employability and learning. In scenario 1 (employability), candidates had to write about their experiences as an English language assistant at a school in Italy, while in scenario 2 (culture) they had to write about staying with an Italian family for three weeks.

An equal number of candidates chose the scenarios. Both scenarios were accessible and allowed candidates to demonstrate their skills and knowledge of Italian.

Question paper 2: Listening

This question paper performed as intended. The paper was on the context of learning. Item 1 was a monologue about choosing a university. Item 2 was a dialogue that focused on the advantages of going to university.

Both items were relevant to candidates' 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 expected, allowing candidates opportunities to use detailed and complex language.

Candidates used a variety of topics from the contexts: society, learning, employability, culture. The assignment offers an element of personalisation and choice and gives candidates opportunities to write on topics that interest them.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper 1: Reading

- question 1(c): many candidates understood the use of the future tense in *l'idea di un matrimonio tradizionale non esisterà più* (a traditional marriage, wedding will (no longer) exist, won't exist (any more))
- question 2(a): offered optionality, and most candidates identified *il desiderio dei giovani di costruire una vita matrimoniale rimane elevato* (the desire for young people to build, have a (married) life together remains high, popular, strong, elevated) or *il matrimonio continua a essere una scelta importante* (marriage is, continues to be an important (choice))
- question 2(b): most candidates gained the marks by identifying *in Italia c'è sempre meno gente disposta a sposarsi in chiesa* and *e questa tendenza è ancora più forte nel nord d'Italia* (fewer, less people in Italy want to, are prepared, decide to get married in a church; this tendency, trend is (even) stronger in the north)
- question 3: many candidates identified 'almost' or 'nearly' 1 in 3 young people are unemployed (*che quasi un giovane su tre è disoccupato*) and gained the mark
- question 4(a): candidates had the choice of three possible answers to gain 2 marks. Many candidates understood *richiede impegno* (requires effort)
- question 5(a): most candidates answered this question well and understood *ascensore sociale* (social climbing)
- question 5(b): many candidates understood *bisogno* (need), and gained the mark
- question 6(a): most candidates understood *smorfia* (a grimace or a smirk)
- question 7 (the overall purpose question): many candidates answered well, and identified and discussed many of the negative reasons given by the author
- question 8, the translation: most candidates demonstrated good awareness of tenses, and translated the last sentence well: 'they wanted a relationship full of love and without complications' (*vogliono una relazione piena d'amore e senza complicazioni*)

Question paper 1: Directed writing

- many candidates coped well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios
- most candidates addressed all bullet points in a full and balanced way
- most candidates addressed their chosen scenario well
- when candidates performed well, they used complex and idiomatic language and expressions
- in scenario 2, most candidates covered the final bullet point well
- many candidates included a range of verbs and idiomatic expressions in their writing and showed control of perfect and imperfect tenses

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1(a)(i): many candidates identified ‘an investment for your future’ (*un investimento per il tuo future*)
- question 1(a)(ii): many candidates identified the question ‘what do you dream of doing for work?’ (*cosa sogni di fare come lavoro?*)
- many candidates gained marks in questions with extra optionality, such as
 - 2(b)(i): with *con una laurea puoi guadagnare molto di più* (with a degree you can earn much more) or *lo stipendio dei laureati è quasi il doppio degli altri giovani* (a graduate’s salary, wage is (almost) double other young people’s/young people who start work (straight after school))
 - 2(b)(ii): with *spesso questo è perché ci sono troppi candidati per certi lavori* (there are too many candidates for certain, some jobs) or *i risultati d’esame degli studenti non sono abbastanza buoni* (exam results are not good (enough))
 - 2(c)(i): identifying ‘do research’, ‘solve problems’ and ‘communicate’ (*gli studenti imparano a fare ricerca, a risolvere problemi e a comunicare con gli altri*)
 - 2(c)(ii): identifying ‘being capable’ or ‘able to work in a group’ (*essere capace lavorare in gruppo*)

Assignment–writing

- many candidates structured 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 candidates' assignments showed a good level of accuracy, with clear evidence of structure and the use of discursive and organisational language, for example:
 - *questa è una domanda decisamente complicata siccome sono due aspetti della vita essenziali'*
 - or phrases such as *D'altra parte, Inoltre, si può sostenere che*

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper 1: Reading

- question 1(a): a few candidates did not specify the 'yet' when referring to the *persone tra i 25 e i 34 anni non è ancora sposato* (people between 25 and 34 years old are not yet married)
- question 1(b): some candidates did not understand *sempre più tardi* (later)
- question 6(b): a few candidates did not give enough detail from the phrases 'she pulled a face' and 'she was like a child who tastes lemon for the first time' (*di solito, quando qualcuno mi parlava di matrimonio facevo una smorfia come i bambini che assaggiano il limone per la prima volta*)
- question 8, the translation:
 - a few candidates paraphrased the translation and wrote their own version of it, rather than giving the original meaning and sense
 - some candidates added or missed out words
 - most candidates did not understand the use of *sia...che* (either...or...) in the opening sentence
 - most candidates did not understand *per loro quello che conta* (for them what counts, matters)

Question paper 1: Directed writing

- a few candidates missed out on marks as they did not address one or more bullet points
- a few candidates did not cover the bullet points fully (sometimes covering two bullet points in a single sentence) and could not access the higher pegged marks
- many candidates had difficulty with verb conjugation
- some candidates had difficulty with possessives and adjectival agreement
- in scenario 1, a few candidates did not specify how they planned to stay in contact with the friends they made

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1(c): some candidates had difficulty identifying 'if there was an international exchange programme', and 'if it would be possible to spend a year abroad' (*potresti chiedere se ci sono programmi di scambio internazionali o se sarebbe possibile passare un anno all'estero*)
- question 2(a): some candidates had difficulty identifying 'because that is what their friends do' (*perché è quello che fanno i loro amici*)

Assignment-writing

- a few essay titles did not give candidates enough opportunities 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
- a small number of candidates wrote their assignment using a dictionary or wordlist, without conjugating verbs

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

For the comprehension questions, you should ensure candidates:

- read the questions before the text in the reading question paper to gain a sense of the text
- know that if a question says, 'state any one thing', there is more than one possible correct answer
- refer to the marking instructions from past papers to help understand that when words or phrases are highlighted in bold, they must include them in their answers to gain the mark(s)
- have a good understanding of numbers in Italian and of qualifiers for these, for example *più di*, *ancora*, *meno di*, *sempre di più*
- give as much detail as they can in their answers, including qualifiers and quantifiers

For the overall purpose question, you 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 which were not used in the questions, as these can be used to support their assertions
- avoid directly quoting from the text

For the translation question, you should ensure candidates:

- are aware that accuracy plays a vital role in this question and that incorrect verb tenses and adjectives do not gain marks
- re-read each sense unit to ensure they have translated every word, and that it makes sense
- refer to the marking instructions from past papers to help understand the division of the translation into sense units, each worth 2 marks
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Question paper 1: Directed writing

You should ensure candidates:

- give a balanced response to each bullet point
- know that for the first bullet point, they must address two pieces of information
- read the scenarios and bullet points carefully and ensure they give all the required information
- know to use a variety of tenses and structures to achieve the higher pegged marks
- refer to the marking instructions and the productive grammar grid in the [Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) so they are fully prepared for what is required at Higher level
- know they must address each bullet point
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Question paper 2: Listening

You should ensure candidates:

- regularly practise listening skills and note-taking
- use the time before the recording starts to read the questions
- try to identify or highlight key words in each question
- know that if a question says, 'state any one thing', there is more than one possible correct answer
- give as much detail as they can in their answers, including qualifiers and quantifiers
- practise common vocabulary on a regular basis. This includes vocabulary covered before starting the Higher course, for example days of the week, time, numbers, months of the year, food, shopping, travel, holidays, weather and family
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Assignment–writing

You should ensure candidates:

- refer to the specific marking instructions for the assignment–writing, and that they must 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
- refer to the marking instructions to help prepare for this question paper
- refer to examples of discursive writing on our [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
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines