Pupil assessment

The 'Charter of Students' ([Statuto delle studentesse e degli studenti](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice)) in secondary schools establishes that students are entitled to ‘a transparent and rapid evaluation aimed at starting a process of self-evaluation to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and improve their own performance’.

Pupil assessment is both formative and summative and focuses on pupils’ learning processes as well as on their overall learning outcomes. It should also be consistent with the learning objectives established in the educational offer plan ([PTOF](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice)) of each school, with the National guidelines for the curriculum and with the personalised plans. In the PTOF, the Teachers’ Assembly of each school also defines the methods and criteria for assuring that pupil assessment is equal, transparent and fair.

Class teachers are responsible for daily, periodic and final assessment of pupils.

Periodic assessment takes place at the end of each term. In fact, for assessment purposes, the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school.

Final assessment takes place at the end of each school year and at the first-cycle State leaving examination held at the end of the third year of lower secondary school, corresponding to the end of the first cycle of education.

Teachers also certify the competences attained by pupils by the end of the first cycle of education, as they do at the end of primary education. The certification of competences refers to the ‘Student’s profile’ included in the National Guidelines for the curriculum that describes the competences each pupil is expected to hold at the end of the first cycle of education. Moreover, it must refer to the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined at European level (2006/962/EC). Finally, the certification of competences takes into account important competences developed by pupils through non-formal and informal learning. Competences are evaluated through a four-level scale, each level described with explanatory indicators.

Special dispositions apply for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs and of hospitalised pupils.

**Periodic/annual assessment**

At the end of every term and of every school year, the Class Council, assigns marks to each student for each subject through a procedure known as scrutinio. Each subject teacher proposes the mark for a given pupil, for the relevant subject, to the Class Council that approves the final mark by majority vote. All the teachers for a given class participate in the assessment procedure: subject teachers,
support teachers, teachers of Catholic religion or of the alternative activities depending on each pupil’s choice, all other teachers who have carried out activities in the class (e.g. the teacher for the musical instrument for pupils attending the music branch).

Periodic and annual assessment of pupils’ learning outcomes leads to the assignment of a mark out of ten, corresponding to ten learning levels.

A mark equal or higher than 6/10 means a sufficient attainment of the learning targets expected for the relevant level of education. A mark lower than 6/10 means that the attainment of learning targets is partially or totally lacking. A mark lower than 6/10 in one or more subjects does not affect pupil’s progression to the next grade or the admission to the final State exam. However, the Class council can decide for the non-admission by majority vote and the decision must be motivated.

The description of each pupil’s learning processes and of the overall learning levels reached, supplements the numerical assessment.

Class teacher evaluate each pupil’s behaviour through a synthetic assessment report. Pupils’ behaviour assessment refers to the development of citizenship competences, according to what established by the ‘Charter of students’, by the ‘Joint responsibility agreement’ signed by pupils and parents at enrolment, and by each school regulations.

Teachers of Catholic religion and teachers of the activities alternative to Catholic religion evaluate pupils through synthetic reports describing the interest shown in the subject and the results achieved.

At the end of each period and at the end of the school year, pupils receive a personal assessment document with their marks for each subject, including the synthetic report on their behaviour. Pupils who have attended optional Catholic religion or alternative activities receive their synthetic report separately. Schools are free to develop their own assessment document, provided these basic requirements are met.

For the school year to be valid, pupils in lower secondary education must attend at least three quarters of the annual teaching time. In exceptional cases, schools can autonomously provide for justified derogations. Before the start of each school year, schools must define the annual teaching time to be used to calculate the 75% attendance required to validate the school year. At the same time, the school also defines the circumstances for derogations. If the number of absences jeopardises the possibility of a regular assessment, pupils are not admitted to the next grade or to the State examination at the end of the first cycle of education.

The National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema di istruzione e formazione - INVALSI) carries out the external assessment of pupils. National standardised testing takes place during the third grade, within the month of April. It aims at verifying pupils’ learning attainments in Italian, mathematics and English. The participation in the surveys is one of the mandatory requirements for the admission to the first-cycle leaving examination. Pupils unable to sit for external assessment tests for serious and motivated reasons, have the opportunity to take the tests in a supplementary session.

**First-cycle State leaving examination**

The first-cycle State leaving examination takes place at the end of the third year of lower secondary school. It aims at verifying knowledge, skills and competences acquired by pupils at the end of the first cycle of education, according to the objectives established by the National guidelines for the curriculum.
Admission of candidates

Pupils access the final exam if they:

- attended at least 75% of the annual teaching time;
- did not incurred in disciplinary measures due to particularly serious events implying non admission to the next grade or to the final exam;
- participated in the external national standardised testing in Italian, Mathematics and English.

Pupils access the final examination even if they have not totally or partially met the expected learning attainment targets in one or more subjects (i.e. have marks lower than 6/10). However, the Class council can decide to refuse admission to the final examination to pupils with marks lower than 6/10 in one or more subjects. In this case, decisions must be taken by majority vote and be adequately motivated.

In case of admission to the final exam, the Class council assigns pupils an admission mark in tenths, taking into account pupils’ overall learning process for the three-year period of lower secondary education. The admission mark can even correspond to a non-sufficient assessment, i.e. be less than 6/10, and counts in the average of the final examination mark.

The examination board and the organisation of the exam

An examination board is set up in every school. All teachers of all classes make up the board and the school manager chairs it.

The examination board is divided into sub-commissions, each corresponding to a class, which administer the examinations and carry out the assessment.

The examination consists of three written tests and an interview.

The exam takes place between the end of the school year and the 30th of June. Written tests are held in three, not necessarily consecutive, different days according to the calendar set by individual schools.

The examination board draws up the three written tests, in coherence with the competence development targets established in the National guidelines for the curriculum, and establishes the duration of each test, that must not exceed four hours, as well as the assessment criteria common to all sub-commissions.

Contents of the State examination

The three written tests cover the following subjects:

- Italian or other official instruction language
- mathematics
- foreign languages

The interview usually takes place after the three written tests.

Italian

The written examination in Italian aims at verifying pupils’ mastery of the Italian language and its correct use, as well as pupils’ personal expression skills and the ability to communicate their
thoughts.

Students choose among three different types of tests:

1. writing a narrative or a descriptive text according to specific indications given (e.g. scope, topic, etc.);
2. writing a text providing personal opinions on issues suggested;
3. comprehension and synthesis of a literary, popular or scientific work.

One of the tests can also be a mix of the three.

**Mathematics**

The written examination on mathematics aims at verifying students’ competences related to numbers, spaces and figures, functions, data.

The test, prepared by each examination board, includes both the solutions of problems and open answer questions.

**Foreign languages**

The written examination on foreign languages aims at verifying students’ written comprehension and production competences related to levels A2 for English and A1 for the second community language of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The examination is organised in two different sections, one for each foreign language studied. For each section the examination board prepares the test choosing one, or a mix, of the following types of test: close/open answer questionnaire on a given text, completion or reworking of a text, drawing up of a dialogue on a given plan, writing of a letter on a given general outline, summarising a text.

For students who have chosen to use the two hours of the second language for strengthening the English language or Italian (for foreign students only), the examination covers only the language studied.

**Interview**

The interview covers all subjects from the last grade of school, focusing in particular on reasoning abilities, problem solving, critical thinking, competences related to citizenship and foreign languages. Students attending the musical branch sit also for a practical test of the instrument studied.

**Examination results**

Students are assigned marks in tenths for each written test and for the oral examination.

Firstly, each sub-commission calculates, for each student, the average of marks obtained at written and oral tests. Then, calculates the final mark of the State leaving examination by making the average of the admission mark with the average of marks obtained at tests. A pass is considered a mark of 6/10 or higher. A distinction (lode) can be assigned by unanimous decision of the Committee to students who have obtained a final mark of 10/10.

Results are published by posting it on the bulletin board of the school. Candidates who have not passed the exam, will only find the words ‘not passed’ and not the mark obtained.

Pupils who pass the examination, receive the first-cycle leaving certificate *(Diploma conclusivo del*
primo ciclo di istruzione) that enables access to the second cycle of education.

Progression of pupils

In general, pupils progress to the next grade and are admitted to the first-cycle leaving examination even if they have not fully or totally reached the learning attainment targets in one or more subjects, i.e. in case of pupils have marks lower than 6/10.

At periodic or final assessment, the school warns in good times families of pupils with low marks and autonomously organises specific measures and actions to help pupils improve their learning results.

However, the Class Council can refuse admission to the next grade or to the final exam to pupils who have not partially or totally met the learning attainment targets (less than 6/10). Decision must be taken by majority and must be duly motivated.

Pupils who, according to the Charter of students, have been charged a disciplinary measure of exclusion from the assessment procedure at the end of term/year (scrutinio), are refused admission to the following grade and to the final examination.

A pass at the first-cycle leaving examination and the award of the relevant Diploma enable access to the second cycle of education.

Certification

Schools autonomously establish how to inform pupils and their families on the results obtained in periodic and final assessments. Generally, pupils and families receive an individual assessment paper at the end of both each term and school year. Schools deliver the assessment paper in electronic format and usually parents discuss the results with teachers.

The personal assessment paper released at the end of each school year certifies the pupil’s admission or non-admission to the following grade or to the first-cycle leaving State examination.

Pupils who pass the first-cycle leaving State examination, receive the first-cycle of education leaving Diploma (Diploma conclusivo del primo ciclo di istruzione).

The Diploma shows the student’s personal data and the final mark obtained at the State examination, the length of studies, as well as the foreign language/s and the musical instrument tested at the examination. Each Diploma is given a progressive number shown alongside the year of printing. It also shows the registration number assigned in the 'Register of Diplomas', which the School manager keeps under her/his responsibility, and the date of delivery. Diplomas are printed by the State printing office (Istituto poligrafico dello Stato), according to the model provided every year by the Ministry of Education and are delivered to schools through the Regional school offices (USRs).

Pupils who pass the final State examination receive also a certificate attesting the competences acquired at the end of the first cycle of education.

The certification of competences refers to the ‘Student's profile’ included in the National Guidelines for the curriculum that describes the competences each pupil is expected to hold at the end of the first cycle of education. Moreover, it must refer to the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined at European level (2006/962/EC). Finally, the certification of competences takes into account important competences developed through non-formal and informal learning. Competences are evaluated through a four-level scale, each level described with explanatory indicators. Schools
(teachers) are in charge of drawing up this section of the certificate.

A specific section, drawn up by Invalsi, integrates the certification of competences with a description of attainment targets reached by pupils in the standardised national testing in Italian, mathematics and English.

The Ministry has provided schools with the model valid nationwide for the certification of competences (annex B to the Ministerial Decree no. 742/2017).

**Legislative references**

Law 30 October 2008, no. 169 (general dispositions on students' assessment, partially repealed)

DPR 22 June 2009, no. 122 (assessment, certification, state examinations, partially repealed)

Law 13 July 2015, no. 107 (reform of the education system, reform of pupil assessment)

D.Lgs. 13 April 2017, no. 62 (specific regulation on the reform of pupil assessment)

D.M. 3 October 2017, no. 741 (specific dispositions on the reform of the first-cycle leaving examination)

D.M. 3 October 2017, no. 742 (model for the certification of competences)