



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Italian
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

A regular setting team, working to closely-defined guidance relating to the content, length, difficulty and text type of the components, has held the level of challenge to candidates stable and in line with the challenge presented at Intermediate 1 Level in previous years.

A trend over the past four years has seen a rise in candidates in even numbered years (rising to 72 in 2012) and a decline in candidates in odd numbered years (falling back to 40 in 2013). Throughout this period a decline in candidates from colleges of further education can be noticed (from 17.5% in 2010 to just 2.5% in 2013).

The mean marks for each element for 2013 were:

- ◆ Reading = 18.2 (35)
- ◆ Listening = 12.1 (20)
- ◆ Writing = 7.7 (15)
- ◆ Speaking = 23.0 (30)

The mean marks indicate that, with the exception of Writing, candidates are achieving half or more of the available marks for each component of the exam, with Speaking the strongest skill. The distribution of grades suggests that while the majority of this year's cohort were presented at the correct level and had been well prepared for the examination, a sizeable minority found the Intermediate 1 Level Assessment demanding.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading

Candidates did noticeably well in aspects of all four questions as follows:

- ◆ Question 1: most candidates showed good understanding of the content of a questionnaire concerning a summer job on a farm and consequently scored highly in the five marks available for the True/False statements.
- ◆ Question 2a): 'famosa per la produzione dell'olio d'oliva' was well understood
- ◆ Question 2c): candidates were able to locate the warning 'Ma attenzione' and decode '(l'osservatorio) è chiuso d'inverno'
- ◆ Question 3a): candidates were able to give either the meaning of 'fare nuove amicizie' or 'far parte del gruppo' to obtain the mark
- ◆ Question 3b): 'fare le faccende domestiche' or the alternative 'cucinare' were also well recognised as were:
 - Question 3c) iii: 'ho aiutato a fare il formaggio'
 - Question 3e): 'è vietato fumare/ mangiare la frutta mentre lavori'
 - Question 4b)ii: 'sono piuttosto piccolo/non è necessario essere molto alto'
 - Question 4d) the time 'alle sette'.

Listening

In general the cohort found the Listening Paper accessible, and several candidates scored close to full marks or indeed full marks.

Candidates were able to score well in the supported questions (Question 1 'Quanto tempo hai intenzione di passare in Italia?' and 'Vuoi parlarmi in inglese?' and Question 3 'Vado a trovare mia nonna ... va a nuotare in piscina tutti i giorni').

It was also evident that candidates had been well trained by centres in important basics such as numbers and times, and consequently the language of Question 2 ('Mi sveglio alle sei di mattina') and of Question 6 ('Devi prendere l'autobus numero trentanove') was also successfully handled. Similarly, high-frequency adjectives such as in 'è piccola ma è molto interessante' were generally picked out in the description of Leonardo's da Vinci's house in Question 8, as were the nouns 'dolce' and 'regione' in the phrase 'è un dolce tipico della regione' in Question 10.

Writing

While the mean mark for Writing was just under 50% of the marks available, in Section One 'Famiglia' generally candidates were able to produce correct, if safe language. Markers reported that in the last section 'Interessi' there were examples of adventurous language by some candidates with some complex structures or a tense other than the present employed, all within the confines of the task.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

In the Reading Paper marks often were lost when candidates got close to the meaning of the text, but did not give all due attention to detail, rendering plural nouns as singular, or perhaps understood all of the required passage, but omitted important detail from their answer. On other occasions vocabulary that might have been recognised or understood with the aid of a dictionary escaped the candidate.

- ◆ In Question 2b) candidates gave 'villaggi storici' as 'a historical village' for example.
- ◆ In Question 3b) 'lavare i piatti' was not given by many, although alternative answers were available to the candidate, as was the case with 'fare la doccia dopo mezzanotte' in Question 3e).
- ◆ In Question 4a) 'passare *due ore* ogni sera a studiare' produced another example where more successful candidates gained a mark and less successful candidates on this occasion missed out on a mark through lack of detail in answers in English, as 'study a lot' was not considered sufficient on its own.

Listening

- ◆ Question 4: Some candidates stated that Fabrizio was staying with his own family.
- ◆ Question 5a): Fewer candidates than might have been expected recognised 'passeggiata'.
- ◆ Question 5b): 'festa' was not understood by a surprising number of candidates.
- ◆ Question 6b): 'scendere' caused problems for many.

Writing

Under the pressure of an exam, many errors crept into the responses of less able candidates in particular. Markers reported these as often being the omission of verbs, or the wrong conjugation of verbs. In the first section there was evidence of confusion between 'che si chiama' and 'che si chiamano'. In the third section on school and studies, simple errors occurred in spellings of subjects studied, in adjectival agreements when giving opinions on subjects and in the omission of the accent above 'è'.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

It was evident that a large majority of candidates rose successfully to the challenge presented at Intermediate 1, and that they had been well prepared by their centres to do so. Centres also accurately estimated, to within two per cent, the number of candidates that would obtain a 'D' or 'No Award' (25% the estimate, 27% in the event). Bearing this in mind, centres may consider it advantageous to look upon Access 3/National 3 as an appropriate entry point to qualifications for some candidates.

Reading/Listening

In responding to questions in the Reading and Listening papers, candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question, and give all relevant detail. Candidates are rewarded for demonstrating knowledge rather than penalised for lack of knowledge, and provided a correct answer is not contradicted by subsequent information, the mark can be awarded.

Centres should continue to ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary indicated in the prescribed Themes and Topics for Intermediate 1 so as to be able to respond readily to questions on numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, time, common nouns and interrogatives.

Writing

The predictable nature of the task lends itself to the use of pre-learned material. Nevertheless a greater emphasis, at an earlier stage in the learning process, on understanding the rules underpinning the language that is used ought to help counteract doubt in the mind of the candidate at a later stage. Confident candidates may be encouraged to exploit the section on studies to display knowledge of another tense in addition to the present. The last section on free time also lends itself to adventurous language.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2012	73
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	42
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	38.1%	38.1%	16	70
B	9.5%	47.6%	4	60
C	26.2%	73.8%	11	50
D	4.8%	78.6%	2	45
No award	21.4%	100.0%	9	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.