



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Italian
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

As usual, the examination closely followed the prescriptive guidance to setters relating to each of the components in terms of length, difficulty, style of text and sampling of a range of topics. This resulted in a challenge to the candidates which again was deemed very much 'on standard' and which drew a range of performances, the vast majority of which were at least satisfactory, with many good and very good performances.

There was a slight reduction in the size of cohort, down 12 to 139, though this was still a significant increase on the 2011 figure. It was pleasing to note that just over 10% of entries were from new centres.

Mean marks were:

- ◆ Reading = 21.1 (30)
- ◆ Listening = 12.6 (20)
- ◆ Writing = 14.3 (20)
- ◆ Speaking = 24.4 (30)

Mean scores indicate that candidates achieved more than half the marks available in all components. Speaking remains the strongest component. The settled nature of the Speaking and Writing tasks allows centres to prepare candidates thoroughly to make an important contribution to the total marks achieved.

It is to the credit of centres that, while there may have been a fractional reduction in mean scores across all the components, the percentage of A to C passes this year was an impressive 95%, up slightly from 94% in 2012. There were many excellent performances in all components.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Reading

Candidates engaged with the scenario of a work placement in Milan and responded well to the variety of text types — personal correspondence from a workmate on family life, an advertisement for a youth club, information on youth employment, and a longer magazine article on the lives of two Italian para sports competitors.

- ◆ Question 1a)i) and ii) : candidates readily recognised 'litigavo continuamente con mia sorella' and 'mi considerava una rivale per l'affetto dei miei genitori'.
- ◆ Question 2b) provided three marks for many candidates who correctly identified what was on offer in each of the three zones of the youth club.
- ◆ Question 3a): 'un cd-rom con lo scopo di aiutare a combattere la disoccupazione' was correctly understood by most candidates.
- ◆ Question 3c): 'collegarsi al sito ....e riempire il modulo' was accessible to most too.

- ◆ Question 4b): candidates were generally able to give two correct details from 'Ai sedici anni avevo già lasciato la scuola e lavoravo perché volevo essere indipendente. Ero anche fidanzata e tutto andava bene.'
- Question 4c): the details of Lorendana's car accident and its consequences (le mie gambe sono state paralizzate) were correctly communicated by many candidates.
- ◆ Question 4g): candidates managed to express the central idea of 'il cinquanta per cento degli alberghi non è attrezzato per ospitare i disabili' by either stating 50% of hotels were not equipped to welcome disabled guests, or indeed by concluding that the other 50% were so equipped.

## Listening

Candidates generally find Listening the most testing of the skills but in the Listening Paper too candidates achieved marks throughout. The three passages gave a wide coverage of topics.

Most candidates got off to a good start by picking out: Question 1a) 'Quando hai intenzione di arrivare a Milano?'; 1b) 'nella zona dello stadio'; 1c) 'è caotico, ... c'è molto traffico,' and in 1d) 'I tuoi colleghi ...sanno parlare solo l'italiano.'

In Question 2 the following were understood and provided popular answers:

- ◆ 2a): that Matteo had been working in office administration for two years ('lo lavoro come amministratore all'ufficio da due anni').
- ◆ 2b): that he had managed to get his job because of his ICT skills ('sono riuscito ad avere questo lavoro perché sono bravo in informatica') or that he has good interpersonal skills ('all'intervista ho dimostrato di avere buoni rapporti interpersonali').
- ◆ In 2f): that colleagues go out for a pizza and a beer together at the end of the month ('tutti i colleghi escono a mangiare una pizza e prendere una birra insieme.')

In Question 3 candidates scored highly on 3a), stating that Luisa prefers to be near the sea when it's hot; 3b) that she used to spend her holidays on the Adriatic Coast with her parents; and 3c) that she liked the freedom of spending her holidays at a campsite.

## Writing

Candidates were able to identify with the job of a shop assistant and also bring in interests in fashion. It was pleasing to note how effectively able candidates in particular adapted their language in making specific reference to the job specification. There was good use of complex sentences and even some subjunctives included (se fosse possibile vorrei... ).

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Reading

The overall response to the Reading Paper was generally good to very good. There were, however, instances of three common difficulties: otherwise competent candidates let themselves down when faced with numbers in a text; sometimes a verb was understood but it was rendered in the wrong tense; in other cases a high frequency piece of vocabulary may not have been recognised.

- ◆ Question 1a): in spite of the wording of the question ('... her relationship with her sister in the past', a number of candidates translated 'litigavo' as a present tense.
- ◆ Question 1b): 'di tutto' in the phrase 'parliamo di tutto' caused difficulties, being mistranslated as 'they speak all the time' instead of 'they speak about everything'.
- ◆ Question 2a): the numbers in 'giovani tra i quindici e i vent'anni' were mistranslated by some, as was 'mille' in 'mille possibilità di divertimento'. A number of candidates confused 'in compagnia' with 'campagna'.
- ◆ Question 2c): there was some dictionary mistranslation of 'gratuite' ('gracious', instead of 'free').
- ◆ Question 3: some candidates struggled to understand the 'dove' embedded in longer phrase 'come compilare e dove mandare il curriculum'.
- ◆ Question 4a): some candidates did not read the question carefully to locate the answer in the text (How are things *today* for people with reduced mobility? 'Oggi, le cose per chi possiede una mobilità ridotta sono migliorate ...'), instead giving their answer from the first mention of 'mobilità ridotta' in the text.
- ◆ Question 4(f) proved to be a demanding question and a good discriminator, as mainly the most able candidates achieved the mark, showing good understanding of 'mi ha fatto capire che potevo ancora ottenere risultati importanti'.

## Listening

- ◆ Question 1a): some candidates had difficulty in picking out the question word 'Quando...?' and instead gave 'How long are you staying in Milan?'
- ◆ Question 1b): 'è al terzo piano' was given by relatively few candidates.
- ◆ Question 1d): the difference between 'capiscono' and 'sanno parlare' caused some problems.
- ◆ Question 2c): surprisingly few candidates recognised either 'ammalato' or 'assente' and did not state Matteo's teacher had been ill or absent, either one of which would have been sufficient to get the mark.
- ◆ Question 3b)i): there was some confusion around 'campeggio' with less able candidates stating 'countryside' instead of campsite.
- ◆ Question 3d): most candidates chose the 'mountain scenery' answer, and few understood the 'have a dip in the lake' ('fare il bagno nel lago') option.

## Writing

- ◆ There were still instances of candidates not correctly identifying the job in the job advert. These candidates often also made errors in asking for information about the job, omitting a verb, for example ('Quanto lo stipendio?').
- ◆ When describing their home area or town, candidates often made errors in agreement of adjectives.
- ◆ In discussing their studies, some candidates rely simply on writing a list of subjects, instead of providing interesting opinions or reasons for subject choices.

# Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

## Reading and listening

In preparing candidates for the Reading and Listening Papers, it should be stressed to candidates that they need to read the question very carefully and to try to identify possible 'cue' words in the question to aid in locating the answer in the text.

Centres should continue to ensure that candidates are given a rigorous grounding in the prescribed Themes and Topics, without neglecting the more testing examples of key areas such as numbers, time, days and weather more appropriate at Intermediate 2. These might involve modified larger numbers (*oltre quattro milioni /quattro mila*) or the need to recognise a combination of simpler items embedded in a longer sentence in Listening, for example. Training candidates to routinely offer a sufficient (ie compared to Intermediate 1, an increased) amount of detail in responses remains an important consideration for centres. Care in details of expression of answers in English regarding tenses being translated from the text will also benefit candidates.

## Writing

In Writing, more and more candidates now make use of the specific nature of the job specification (an interest in fashion in the case of the 2013 Paper). The final bullet point requiring the candidate to request information about the job being applied for continues to test less able candidates, who will benefit from fully grasping the grammatical principles behind the language they are using.

Additionally, the best responses to the compulsory bullet point on studies elaborated on the candidates' opinions and reasons, and avoided a mere repetition of a list of school subjects. In terms of accuracy, points on which candidates can benefit from extra attention to detail are:

- ◆ agreement of both number and gender
- ◆ first and third person verb endings (in the present tense in particular)
- ◆ the formation of the present perfect tense

**Statistical information: update on Courses  
Intermediate 2**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2012</b>	151
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2013</b>	144
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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	57.6%	57.6%	83	69
B	22.2%	79.9%	32	59
C	15.3%	95.1%	22	49
D	2.8%	97.9%	4	44
No award	2.1%	100.0%	3	-

## 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.