



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Italian
Level	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

The examination related clearly to the prescribed themes and topics and was at an appropriate level of challenge. Texts were once again either generated by the setter or adapted from original articles and advertisements, or from the Internet. All papers gave rise to a range of marks with a number of candidates scoring full marks in each individual element, and at least one candidate scoring full marks for the whole exam.

It was good to note that there was a significant rise in the number of candidates presented this year – 166, as compared to 125 in 2008, and matching the figure for 2006 (167). Of those presented, 21 candidates had a record of prior attainment at Standard Grade, and one candidate had previously been presented at Intermediate 1 and one at Intermediates 2. 23.5% of the cohort was presented from S4, with the remainder (76.5%) coming from S5, S6 and Further Education.

The Component Averages for each element were as follows (2008 in brackets):

Reading	22.4	(20.9) – up 1.5	Maximum Mark	30
Listening	13.9	(11.2) – up 2.7	Maximum Mark	20
Writing	15.2	(14.0) – up 1.2	Maximum Mark	20
Speaking	25.3	(24.3) – up 1.0	Maximum Mark	30

It is good to see a rise in the mean mark across all elements. It is well above half of the available marks in Reading and Writing. The rise in the mean mark for Listening is particularly welcome as this is generally an area that candidates, with so little time to prepare and develop, find challenging. The rise in the mean for Writing, a reasonably predictable element, indicates that this cohort has performed well overall. This is very encouraging, and centres are to be congratulated on the preparation of their candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The performance in Reading overall was very good, with a number of candidates scoring full marks. Candidates generally coped well with the shorter passage, and a good number were able to sustain this level of performance in the longer final passage. The performance in Listening was also very satisfactory, with a number of candidates scoring full marks. Candidates coped well with questions involving vocabulary from more predictable areas, such as house locations and descriptions, and with sports. Candidates were well prepared for the Writing task. There were some excellent performances, and all markers commented on how few candidates fell into the *Unsatisfactory* or *Poor* categories. It was good to note how many of the better candidates made clear efforts to ensure that their letter of application was directed at the specific job spec they had been given, and that they were not simply writing out, verbatim, a prepared essay. This ensured that many of them scored full marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Surprisingly at Intermediate 2, some candidates had problems with *macchine*. It may be that they did not recognise FIAT as a make of car, and that this confused them. In the first passage, a significant number of candidates did not understand *chili*, did not notice that it was followed by *di*, and jumped to the conclusion that Stefania was eating chilli flavoured yoghurt. In this passage also, the pronoun *lei* was not always recognised. In the second passage, candidates did not realise that *Spinelli* began with a capital letter and was, therefore, a name. This gave rise, not infrequently, to answers about joint projects. A surprising number of candidates rendered *vent'anni* as 21. In the third passage, *all'aperto* was frequently confused with *è aperto*, while many candidates did not recognise *diversa* and assumed it meant diverse. This is an instance where avoiding recourse to the dictionary did not serve the candidates well. However, *diverso* should have been known at Intermediate

2. In passage 4, *centinaia* was read as *una centinaia*, and often translated as ‘about 100’. The construction with *da* was either not recognised, or else *da* was read as *ha*, resulting in many answers stating that Laura was 20. Some candidates lost marks for giving insufficient information in answer to the question 1c – What do [Fabrizio and Stefania] say about each other? Mention **three** things. Some candidates seemed to assume that in stating that ‘his trousers were too long **and** wide’, they were supplying two bits of information. A global understanding of this section of the passage should have indicated that it was unlikely that this would be sufficient. Candidates at Intermediate 2 should realise that they are unlikely to get one mark for one word.

In Listening, in question 1, a significant number of candidates failed to recognise the high number (100,000), and a number were careless with the time, confusing *sei* and *sette*. In question 2, some candidates confused *passione* and *paziente*. A few candidate in this question also confused *eventi* with *venti*. In the third question, *caldo* was sometimes taken to mean *cold*. Some candidates also found it difficult to distinguish between ‘found her a job’ and ‘gave her a job’.

In Writing, candidates who relied on rote-learned essays failed to address the job advert effectively. Some limited themselves to addressing it in a general manner in their reasons for their application. In the letters of some of those who did make the attempt, the quality of the writing fell markedly. There seemed to be an inability to manipulate the language, even though putting *sono* in front of *dinamico/dinamica*, or *responsabile* would have sufficed. In rote-learned letters, too, candidates missed out words, either without noticing or else leaving gaps, and made even basic errors in grammar.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In Reading and Listening, candidates should be very familiar with the vocabulary that could be expected to arise from the prescribed themes and topics, in particular, in Listening, to numbers, school and leisure vocabulary, weather, common adjectives, and other qualifiers. They should not have to use a dictionary for these areas. They should also have some knowledge of the background of the country, including names such as FIAT. Centres should be aware that excessive brevity in candidates’ answers, or candidates who answer in note form rather than in sentences, can often make the answers ambiguous, and lead to lost marks. In Reading, candidates should be encouraged to ensure that they have a global understanding of the passages, and not to concentrate solely on the small section in which they assume the answer is to be found. They should also be aware that, while they should not give excessive information, they are unlikely to get a mark for a one-word answer. In Reading, candidates should be given practice in dealing with longer passages, similar to those in question 4, and passage that include some fairly complex sentences. Candidates should be encouraged to pay attention to punctuation. A sound knowledge of common relative pronouns and conjunctions will make it easier for candidates to decode these sentences.

In Writing, candidates should ensure that they address all bullet points in a balanced way. Centres should discourage candidates from writing long lists of subjects when dealing with school/college career. This cannot give the variety of language that is looked for at Intermediate 2. In dealing with their reasons for their applications, candidates should be encouraged to look at the specific interests/talents/personality required of the applicant as stated in the advert, and ensure that they address this in their letter. Candidates should also ensure that the questions they ask fit the job for which they are applying. It is only by so doing that good candidates can be sure of achieving full marks.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	125
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	182
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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	70.9%	70.9%	129	69
B	11.5%	82.4%	21	59
C	8.8%	91.2%	16	49
D	2.2%	93.4%	4	44
No award	6.6%	100.0%	12	-

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.