



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Italian
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 again closely followed the prescriptive guidance to setters relating to each of the components in terms of length, difficulty, text type and sampling of a range of topics, resulting in a challenge to the candidates deemed very much 'on standard'.

In this, the first year of 'dual running' of the exam alongside National 4 Italian, there was a very slight reduction in the size of the cohort, down to 37 from 40 in 2013. Despite the slight decrease in entries, these came from a larger number of centres, including some returning centres and some presenting for the first time.

Estimates from centres predicted many fewer 'D' or 'No Awards' than in 2013 (2.7% as opposed to 25% in 2013), suggesting that the cohort of 2014 was of higher ability.

Feedback from markers was indeed that the cohort had been appropriately presented by their centres, had found the level of the exam suitable, and rose well to the challenge presented, to the extent that for the first time a 100% A to C award rate was achieved.

Mean marks were as follows:

Reading = 26.7 (35) — up 8.5 on 2013
Listening = 14.2 (20) — up 2.1 on 2013
Writing = 8.8 (15) — up 1.1 on 2013
Speaking = 24.6 (30) — up 1.6 on 2013

Areas in which candidates performed well

In the **Reading** component, markers' feedback was that overall candidates' responses were very good, and that candidates had found the 'Campsite' theme one they could relate to.

The great majority of candidates did particularly well in:

- ◆ Q2(b) concerning qualities required in a summer camp activity leader, recognising *essere pazienti* and *avere molta energia*.
- ◆ Q2(c) on sports that leaders should do: *giocare a calci* or *nuotare*
- ◆ Q3(a)(i) where the age range *dagli otto ai quattordici anni* was successfully decoded.
- ◆ Q3(b) on camping skills, where three separate bullet points enabled many candidates to pick up full marks.
- ◆ Q4(a)(ii) 'she goes to the cinema with her best friend' and
- ◆ Q4(a)(iii) that 'she prefers her local cinema as she can get there on foot and it does not take long to get there'.
- ◆ Q4b(iv) candidates successfully explained he liked hang-gliding as it gives him a feeling of freedom, like a bird.

The **Listening** component is traditionally one which candidates find more challenging than the Reading component and, while this was also the case this year, the smaller and seemingly able cohort coped well and achieved well over 50% of the available marks.

Items testing vocabulary on Home Area (Q1), Weather (Q2), Time and Daily Routine (Q4), and TV programmes (Q5) were well handled; as were questions aimed at sampling recognition of Transactional Language: (Q6) 'going to and ice cream shop (in the city)', (Q7) 'three euros fifty', and directions (Q9) 'take the second on the left'.

In **Writing**, feedback was that candidates coped well with the task, there being very few candidates at all who did not manage to make at least three statements in each of the four sections. Many candidates made competent, well-prepared responses to this component, which remains stable from year to year.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the **Reading** component at times answers were embedded in slightly longer pieces of text and some candidates, unsurprisingly, found this more challenging than the 'bullet point' type answers in other parts of the text.

In Q2(d): *sapere identificare tutti i tipi di animali della zona* caused some problems for candidates, although 'animals' was accepted. Most candidates did not mention 'in the area/zone'.

In Q4(a)(i): Quite a few candidates assumed that Lorella would go to the cinema at the weekend, and so lost the mark for not recognising *una volta alla settimana*.

In Q4(b)(vi): Not many candidates got 'hopes hang-gliding will be an Olympic sport', giving an answers such as 'hopes to go to the Olympics' — perhaps problems in understanding the future tense in *sarà uno sport Olimpico*.

In **Listening** in Q1(b) relatively few candidates gave 'he is the biggest/oldest/tallest/eldest', though candidates could and did achieve the mark by giving 'he has three brothers'. For Q3(a), few candidates recognised that Marco had lost his *macchina fotografica*, perhaps a sign of the times that many now use a phone to take photographs, not a camera. In Q7(a) some candidates struggled with the vocabulary, or perhaps the idea, of a 'return ticket'.

In **Writing** it was reported that the majority of candidates achieved 9 or 12 marks with safe, relatively accurate performances. There were relatively fewer longer but accurate performances with the co-ordinating conjunctions and the wider range of vocabulary necessary to achieve the top score of 15. On occasions a verb was spelled correctly in one section, only to be misspelled in a later section. Words containing two vowels together also caused a problem at times, eg *scuola*.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Listening

In preparing candidates for the Reading and Listening Papers, centres should of course continue to ensure that candidates are given a rigorous grounding in the prescribed Themes and Topics and high-frequency vocabulary. Candidates should also be encouraged to take every care in supported questions, and to beware of incorrect 'distractor' options.

While every effort is made to word questions as simply and unambiguously as possible, candidates should also be aware to look for important 'cue' words in the question which help them to focus on the exact meaning and also where to locate the question. Training in recognising key verbs in gradually more dense 'chunks' of text will help prepare the candidates to extract the correct meaning without being tempted to guess at a meaning by relying on recognition of a high-frequency noun and an adjective.

Writing

In Writing, candidates should be encouraged to create one longer sentence from two shorter ones by the use of conjunctions. Additionally, they should be discouraged from producing long lists of vocabulary, for example when writing about school subjects or hobbies.

It cannot be emphasised too much that once a piece of writing is completed, it should be read over again, checking for accuracy and also consistency in spelling of the same word, especially when it contains double consonants or two vowels together.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	42
------------------------------------	----

Number of resulted entries in 2014	39
------------------------------------	----

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	59.0%	59.0%	23	70
B	23.1%	82.1%	9	60
C	12.8%	94.9%	5	50
D	0.0%	94.9%	0	45
No award	5.1%	-	2	-

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.