



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Italian
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

Each year the examination closely follows 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. The level of challenge across the components was deemed very much on a par with that of previous years.

This was the first year of 'dual running' of the exam alongside National 5 Italian. While there was a reduction in the size of the cohort, down to 115 from 139 in 2013, there was also a significant increase within these numbers of S6 candidates relative to S5 candidates, with S6 composing 35% of the cohort, approximately double that of S5 numbers.

There was a higher number of strong performances at upper 'A', a statistic not apparent, perhaps, in the Mean mark scores below. Feedback from markers was that the cohort had been presented at the appropriate level and had performed well to very well on the whole.

Mean marks were as follows:

Reading = 23.4 (30) — up 2.3 on 2013

Listening = 15.6 (20) — up 3 on 2013

Writing = 14.8 (20) — up 0.5 on 2013

Speaking = 25.5 (30) — up 1.1 on 2013

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading

Candidates gained marks consistently across the question paper. There were fewer weak performances than in previous years, and the vast majority managed to complete answers within the time limit. Centres had also prepared their candidates well to find cue words in the questions, which enabled them successfully to locate answers in the text. Candidates coped comfortably with:

- ◆ Q1(a) the age range question
- ◆ Q1(b) why the instructor did not earn much money (on days of bad weather lessons are cancelled and he only works four hours a day)
- ◆ Q2(a) about the adolescent son asking to be able to go on holiday on his own
- ◆ Q3(c) about how you can create your online diary without spending a euro
- ◆ Q4(a)(i) about how Eva Riccobono's career developed when she was nineteen (she started to do modelling work)
- ◆ Q4(a)(ii) testing the superlative ('she was one of the most photographed models in the world')
- ◆ Q4(d) about Eva's advice to herself if she could be sixteen again, ie not to worry about other people's opinions
- ◆ Q4(f)(iii) concerning the singer Walter Fontana's advice, that it is not necessary to invent excuses for friends if you want to be alone

Listening

The Listening component was considered to be accessible both in terms of topics covered (a school exchange in Scotland from an Italian perspective, future plans, and leisure and tourism) and the level of challenge.

Candidates got off to a good start in Q1(a) by recognising the high-frequency term *andare d'accordo*, albeit in the past tense, or had the option of recognising a cognate in *erano persone molto generose* to gain the mark. Most candidates correctly identified *lavora in un ospedale* in Q1(b)(i), and in Q1(e) rose successfully to the challenge involved with the comparison about school life (Vittorio had less homework to do in Scotland than he had in Italy).

In Q2(b)(i) candidates availed themselves of a choice of detail they could provide surrounding Arianna's intentions for the summer: work on a boat, or work as a waitress, or work for a wealthy English family. In Q2(b)(ii) and Q3(d) knowledge of 'Wider World' vocabulary provided marks for many who picked out 'visit beautiful places on the Mediterranean Coast' or 'get a nice suntan' and who provided sufficient detail in 'visit the National Museum of Scotland' rather than just 'a museum'.

Writing

Markers' feedback was that candidates responded well to the nature of the job advert, which allowed them to relate their sporting activities directly to the requirements of the post advertised, one of the criteria necessary to attract the top mark. This therefore allowed responses which covered all five compulsory areas in a balanced manner while handling all aspects of grammar and spelling accurately to indeed achieve the top mark.

On the whole the component was tackled well and the responses were well structured, with a wide range of language and tenses used. It was noted by markers that there were very few instances where the candidates struggled with the task, and that the responses were of a higher standard overall than in some previous years.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

In the Reading component there were no non-performing questions and indeed no single question had an unsatisfactory level of correct responses. Some candidates, however, in Q1(a), perhaps through carelessness, confused *sette* with *sei* and gave the age range as 'between three and six'.

Some candidates in Q2(a) did not recognise, or at least give in their answer, the negative *nessuno*: ie 'he doesn't want to play with **anyone**', and consequently did not gain the mark.

In Q4(b)(i) candidates located the answer in the text only to be struggled with the idea that Eva Riccobono had lots of 'complexes', instead translating *complessi* as 'complicated'.

In Q4(c) some candidates gave 'she ate and put on weight' without understanding the real meaning of the full sentence: '**nobody** told her to eat to put on weight'. Again the negative *nessuno* was not recognised here.

Listening

Markers reported that the questions functioned correctly and there were no issues with applying the marking scheme. Where questions attracted fewer marks, it tended to be because an item of vocabulary was not recognised.

- ◆ In Q2 (a)(i) *stanca* was not understood in this context by some candidates, who were not able then to state that Arianna was 'tired of studying'.
- ◆ In Q3(a) *pallavolo* or even the alternative *andare in palestra*, which candidates might have identified in a reading passage, were not recognised when embedded in the monologue.

On occasions it was a lack of sufficient detail in the answer that prevented a mark being awarded: in Q1(f) candidates had to convey the idea Vittorio had perfected or improved his English, rather than just 'he learned English'. Similarly in Q3(d) the attraction Vittorio visited had to be qualified in some way based on other details in the transcript (ie 'the **famous** castle'; 'the castle **in the centre of town**', etc.)

Writing

Markers reported that some able candidates dealt with the first bullet points in a short, hurried manner and did not fully exploit the chance to show their ability in these. As the criteria for the top grade state that all bullet points must be covered fully in a balanced way, this did not work to the advantage of these candidates.

Adapting phrases from the job advert often causes problems. A common error is when candidates fail to spot the need to add an indefinite article when using a singular noun contained in the advert (*passione per lo sport*): eg *ho **una** passione per lo sport*. There were also some instances where able candidates lost marks due to failure to ask for information about the job.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Listening

In preparing candidates, 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.

Centres should also refer to the grammar flowchart specifying grammar points appropriate to Intermediate 2 level in the Course Guidelines as a guide when planning areas of grammar to cover with candidates during their preparation.

In Listening, candidates will continue to benefit from practice in recognising a combination of simpler items of vocabulary embedded in longer sentences. Training candidates routinely to offer a sufficient (ie compared to Intermediate 1, an increased) amount of detail in responses will remain a constant factor with centres.

Care in details of expression of answers in English regarding tenses being translated from the text will also benefit candidates.

Writing

In Writing, candidates should be encouraged to exploit the predictable nature of the exercise to go into more detail on the earlier bullet points in order to have covered all bullet points fully in a balanced manner.

Centres should continue supporting their candidates to produce well-structured responses.

Training candidates on the intricacies of how to use the requirements listed in the job advert and adapt them to fit into a response will be of benefit. For example, the listing of a series of nouns in the job advert (*passione per lo sport, abilità informatiche*) will require the addition of the indefinite article for a singular noun (*ho **una** passione per lo sport*), whereas a plural noun can be used as it is (*ho abilità informatiche*).

Omission of a request for information about the job was an occasional problem that affected candidates regardless of ability, and all should be reminded of the need to check for inclusion of this request in their responses.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	144
Number of resulted entries in 2014	116

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	75.0%	75.0%	87	69
B	16.4%	91.4%	19	59
C	4.3%	95.7%	5	49
D	2.6%	98.3%	3	44
No award	1.7%	-	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.