



External Assessment Report 2012

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

Once again the examination this year 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. This resulted in challenge to the candidates that was very much 'on standard'.

Regarding the size and composition of the 2012 cohort, there was a pleasing increase in the number of candidates compared to 2011. While there was a significant drop in the numbers of candidates from S5 and S6, this was compensated for by the increase in numbers of candidates from S4.

Feedback from markers was that the large majority of the candidates had been appropriately presented by their centres, had found the level of the exam suitable, and had risen to the challenge presented.

Mean Marks were:

Reading = 21.0 (35)
Listening = 10.6 (20)
Writing = 8.8 (15)
Speaking = 24.2 (30)

Mean marks indicate that candidates achieved more than half marks available in all components, with Speaking continuing to make the greatest contribution to marks awarded. While in Listening candidates benefit from hearing each item three times, this continues to be a relatively testing skill. Writing similarly proves relatively testing, though there were also pleasing responses in this component attracting full marks.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates related well to the topical Olympic theme running through the **Reading Paper**. Marks were achieved in all questions, including in the formal text of the third question, while high frequency vocabulary in the longer text for Question 4 (a) (i) ('migliori amici', 'piscina' (d)(i) 'funghi', (e) (i) il mese di gennaio, and (f) 'preferisco le machine italiane') was well recognised by many candidates.

In the **Listening Paper** candidates had been well prepared by centres on essentials such as the Personal Identification topic, with most candidates picking up full marks on Question 1 ('siamo in Italia per trovare nostro zio ma noi siamo francesi') and many also doing well with time in Question 3 (mi alzo alle cinque e trenta) as well as on directions in Question 8, understanding directions in terms of advice (non bisogna andare a piedi. È lontano,... è meglio prendere l'autobus numero due). The tourism aspects of the syllabus tested in

Question 6) (il più bel panorama della città and food in Question 8) were similarly well handled.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Sometimes the 'supported' question (for example True/False or tick the correct boxes) can be testing for candidates who may be tempted to tick a seemingly obvious box at first glance and end up missing a mark. This was the case in the **Reading Paper**, with a number of candidates in Question 1 failing to distinguish between school subjects ('fisica' and 'educazione fisica'), or to recognise 'vorrei' before 'palestra' leading candidates to believe the athlete already had his own gym.

In Question 2 (b)(i) the cognate 'tatuaggi' was correctly recognised by many candidates while the high frequency 'pantaloni' was not by others. In Question 3 (d)(i) a mark was sometimes lost by failure to recognise 'accanto alla cucina', the answer erroneously being given as 'in the kitchen' instead of 'next to' or 'beside'. In Question 4 d)(ii) only the more able candidates recognised 'alcuni' and 'altri', whereas other candidates placed all 'funghi' in a single category.

In the **Listening Paper**, more candidates might have been expected to recognise 'gratuito', in Question 2 even though it was embedded in the phrase 'il mercoledì è gratuito per studenti.' In Question 4 'festa' was another high frequency piece of vocabulary that escaped a number of candidates, and in aiming to understand the length of time 'un'ora e mezza' in Question 5, responses of 'one hour' or just 'half an hour' were not uncommon.

In **Writing** there was evidence of some candidates being uncertain of correct verb endings, often arising from confusion between the first person singular '-o' ending and the third person singular '-a' ending, or of perhaps older mistakes reappearing, such as the misspellings 'Edinburgo' or 'kilometri'. There was also occasional omission of the reflexive pronoun 'si', and some candidates were unaware of the need to omit the article before single family members ('la mia madre' instead of 'mia madre' and 'il mio padre' instead of 'mio padre').

More able candidates did not make full use of their undoubted language abilities in the first section, producing accurate but basic responses here. Mainly less able candidates, though a few more able ones also, lost marks by not including at least three verbs in each section to produce three 'sentences' or at least three separate sense units.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

In preparing candidates for the **Reading** and **Listening Papers**, centres should continue to ensure that candidates are given a rigorous grounding in the prescribed Themes and Topics and high frequency vocabulary. At the same time, centres should underline how it may not

be enough just to recognise an item of vocabulary but also necessary to focus on how the sense of a phrase can change depending on the accompanying verb, eg the difference between 'ho la mia ...' and 'vorrei la mia ...', or 'vado alla partita' and 'vuoi andare alla partita?'. Candidates should also be encouraged to take every care in supported questions, and to beware of incorrect 'distractor' options.

In **Writing**, given that the format remains constant from year to year, there is real scope for all candidates to build up an increasingly accurate and effective response in the course of the session, underpinned by understanding of key grammar points. Preparatory 'gap fill' and 'post feedback' remedial 'gap-fill' exercises may help candidates to focus more clearly on some essential points and gradually perfect their performance in this component. Candidates should also be reminded to check that each section they complete has three verbs in it in order to avoid any penalty. It was noted that the most able candidates' very good content in the last three sections was not sometimes produced under the initial 'Famiglia' heading, and these candidates could gain advantage by being encouraged by centres to introduce more variety and complexity in this section.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	50
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	73
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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	41.1%	41.1%	30	70
B	20.5%	61.6%	15	60
C	16.4%	78.1%	12	50
D	8.2%	86.3%	6	45
No award	13.7%	100.0%	10	-

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.