



External Assessment Report 2012

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

Once again the examination this year 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 that was very much 'on standard' and which drew a range of (in the main very competent) performances.

The welcome increase in the number of candidates (up 61 to 151) would tend to indicate that the previous year's reduced size of cohort was an aberration rather than part of a trend. Each year the composition of the cohort may vary, and this year saw a sizeable increase in numbers being presented at S4 compared to those being presented at S5.

Mean marks were:

- ◆ Reading = 21.0 (30) — down 0.1 on 2011
- ◆ Listening = 13.1 (20) — down 2.3 on 2011
- ◆ Writing = 14.9 (20) — down 0.1 on 2011
- ◆ Speaking = 25.0 (30) — down 0.6 on 2011

Mean scores indicate that candidates achieved more than half the marks available in all components, with Speaking, but also the settled nature of the Writing task, allowing centres to prepare candidates thoroughly to make important contributions to total marks achieved. There were also examples of outstanding performances in each of the externally-assessed components and few weak performances.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates overall found the **Reading Paper** accessible throughout the initial three texts based loosely around the scenario of work experience in Hotel Management in Venice and also the more involved longer Q4 text on Giorgio Armani's interest in animal welfare and the value of pets. Candidates did well in parts (b) and (d) of Question 1 on Venice ('non c'è rumore di macchine' and 'la Piazza San Marco è spesso sotto l'acqua del mare').

All parts of Question 3 on holiday destinations in particular were well dealt with by candidates, and it is worth mentioning candidates' response to Question 4 (g), which involved understanding of the sentence 'Nel caldo dell'estate ... il cane vede il proprietario mangiare il gelato normale e soffre, perché il cane non deve mangiarlo, perché contiene troppi zuccheri' where candidates gave more than enough information to obtain two marks.

The **Listening Paper** was also handled satisfactorily, indicating that candidates had received a good grounding in the skill both at the required level and across the range of topics sampled. Most candidates achieved the mark at Question 1 (b) (tra le lingue principali che parliamo al campeggio sono italiano, inglese e tedesco) and the reasons for Margherita

liking computing in question 2 (c) (sono appassionata di tecnologia ma anche perché è molto utile per il mondo del lavoro). Candidates also rose to the challenge in Question 3 (d) about Matteo's weekends (dobbiamo stare attenti ad andare in macchina ... perché ci sono stati molti incidenti stradali).

In **Writing** there were many examples of responses where candidates had been well versed in the task by centres and equipped to adapt learned material appropriately to the job specification showing flexibility and range of vocabulary at this level. The optional points on work experience and previous links with Italy were well exploited by many candidates, allowing them to include impressive vocabulary specific to themselves.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In both the **Reading and Listening Papers** some candidates had difficulty with key aspects such as numbers, time, days and weather.

In **Reading** Question 4 (c) (i) and (ii) 'quattro milioni' was mistakenly translated as 'a quarter of a million' and 'sessanta per cento' as 'seventy per cent'. In Question 4 (c) (i) failure to recognise the present tense, or lack of precision with English expression, caused some candidates to lose a point when 'partono in vacanza ogni anno' was translated as '**went** on holiday last year'. On Question 4 (h) (i) the full amount of detail required was not offered by some candidates, for example that the 'child' or 'children' '**learn(s)** to play and talk with them/their pets' (perché lui o lei impara a giocare e parlare con loro) rather than only 'children play with/talk to their pets'. Occasionally a 'false friend' can cause confusion, as with 'parenti' in Question 1 (a), which elicited 'parents' instead of 'relatives'.

In **Listening** Question 1, time phrases ('comincio a lavorare alle dieci del mattino e finisco alle undici di sera') presented difficulties to some, as did the length of time ('a un'ora e mezza in macchina') in Question 2 (a) and days ('Lavoro da sabato a giovedì') in Question 1 (d), though some candidates did achieve the mark through the alternative answer: 'e il venerdì ho un giorno di riposo'. Items of weather caused difficulties — in Listening Question 2 (b) (i) 'nebbia' was mistaken for 'neve' and in (ii) 'temporali' not recognised as weather by some candidates, who mistook it for 'temporary'.

In **Writing** the final bullet point continues to be a source of inaccuracies of spelling or expression in candidates' responses. In the case of otherwise good, full responses, this final bullet point was merely dealt with by a single short question on occasions. Interestingly, when candidates ended up incurring a two point deduction for omission of a compulsory bullet point, it was this final bullet point on a request for information about the job which was the one omitted.

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, without neglecting the more testing examples of key areas such as numbers, time, days and weather more appropriate at Intermediate 2 level. These might involve modified larger numbers (oltre quattro milioni di ...) 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 increased, compared to Intermediate 1) amount of detail in responses is 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.

In **Writing**, it was pleasing to note how more and more candidates now make use of the specific nature of the job specification ('Information Technology' in the case of the 2012 Paper). The next area in which candidates can refine the content of their responses is the final bullet point requesting information about the job being applied for. Additionally, the best responses to the compulsory bullet point on studies involved candidates in giving opinions and reasons and avoiding 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:

- ◆ agreements 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

Number of resulted entries in 2011	93
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	151
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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	65.6%	65.6%	99	69
B	15.9%	81.5%	24	59
C	11.9%	93.4%	18	49
D	1.3%	94.7%	2	44
No award	5.3%	100.0%	8	-

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.