

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Modern Languages

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Italian - Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	14
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	14
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

Entry numbers consistent with 2004 as one candidate with incomplete or duplicate components was excluded from pass mark setting.

Candidates were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including two mature students. Although four candidates have Italian surnames, only one is a native speaker of the language.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 200	-	-	-	-
A	64.3	64.3	9	140
B	7.1	71.4	1	120
C	0.0	71.4	0	100
D	14.3	85.7	2	90
No award	14.3	100.0	2	-

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

Comments on any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

There were no significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The papers were challenging but fair and were very well balanced. This allowed excellent candidates to shine and it also allowed others to compensate in one part for weakness in another. The standard is high, as in previous years and there is evidence of careful instruction and teaching. There were four candidates of Italian descent but of these, only one was a native speaker.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Paper 1: Candidates coped well with this Paper. The Translation from Italian to English was better than in previous years.

Paper 2: Listening was mostly very good with two exceptions.

In Discursive Writing, there were two outstandingly good essays. Most candidates chose subjects in which they could relate personal experiences rather than the more reflective titles.

Overall, slightly better performance than in 2004.

Folio: Most candidates were well prepared and presented good work. Two weak candidates brought the percentage down by almost 1% but this is not significant considering the number of candidates.

Speaking: generally good.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Paper 1: The main weakness was shown in the inference questions demanding analytical skills.

Folio: Once again there were a few cases of poor choice of essay titles. This requires more guidance from Centres.

There was also some evidence of lack of understanding of what constitutes a Bibliography. Two candidates gave as Bibliography only the title and publishing details of the book they had studied. This was not penalised whereas if a candidate did not attempt to mention anything as Bibliography, they dropped one pegged mark. This matter has to be clarified urgently.

Candidates also need to be reminded of the need to proof-read their essays.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Overall, good performance.

More preparation required to answer inference questions and in translation from Italian to English. Again, all grammatical points to be constantly revised and vocabulary increased.

If candidate reads English translation of text, it should be made clear that translation must be used judiciously and that text must be read in original Italian language.

More attention to be given to clearly defined choice of essay titles, preparation of Bibliography and proof-reading.